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ABOVE, *A country dwelling.*
BELOW, *A combite at work.*

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made of key-men in the district informally called *chefs d'escouade*. They have the reputation of being those to whose call a number of men, perhaps a dozen, perhaps two or three times that many, will respond and come to give the aid that is desired. Such a person is given a "bouquet"—a bottle of *clairin*—which insures the appearance of himself and his group on the date set. A *combite* may be held at any time during the week except Sundays, which are dedicated to rest, and Tuesdays (in earlier times Mondays), when tradition holds a person must be free to work his own fields and care for tasks needed to be done at his own house. There is no requirement in either law or custom to respond to the call for communal work, and the larger landowners, who usually reside in the towns, rarely participate in a *combite*. So great is the pleasure derived from work of this sort, however, and so living is the realization among the peasantry of its potential benefits, that a man hesitates before he refuses to take part in a *combite* to which he has been summoned. Sometimes a man who has been faithful in his attendance at *combites* and has worked well at them falls ill during the time for planting or for clearing his ground of underbrush or for hoeing. In such case a *combite* is summoned, and even though this man is unable to offer the usual feast, his services are remembered and the men work with a will to insure the proper preparation of his ground.

The scene in a field where a large *combite* is at work is an arresting one. The men form a line, with a drummer in front of their hoes. The *simidor*, who leads the singing as he works with the others, adds the rhythm of his song to the regular beats of the drum, thus setting the time for the strokes of the implements wielded by the workers. This drum, slung about the neck of the drummer, is of the European form, never the hollowed-out African type that figures in religious rites. Its sound can carry far, however, and thus it not only beats the time for the hoes, but notifies all concerned that the *combite*

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is under way. The size of the *combite* is judged by the number of drums and *lambi*, or conch-shell horns used, for where two or three of either are required, an especially large group of workers is usually assembled. It may be observed in passing that it is undoubtedly the sound of this *combite* drum, heard in the mountains or through the brush by travelers, that has so often been mistaken for the "mysterious booming" of the *vodun* drums.[1]

The preparation of the food is the work of the women of the household giving the *combite*, aided by their female relations and the wives of friends and neighbors. This is no small task, for goats and even a bullock may be killed to feed a large *combite*, while in addition other dishes to go with the meat must be cooked. Each woman is given charge of a great pot and does her best to see to it that an appetising dish is ready for the men when their work is done. While the food is being cooked, the real object of the *combite*, the clearing of the field, is being pursued. A *chef d'esquade*, usually with a small group, begins the afternoon's labor, and, being a fast worker, he himself sets the pace. As more men arrive, he walks about, encouraging the constantly increasing number of men in their efforts, seeing to it that the tempo originally set is continued, and when necessary picking up a hoe to restore a lagging rhythm. Occasionally the *chef d'esquade* will stand in front of the men to make sure that all keep together, and if the lazy cannot be roused to work by direct order or through ridicule, he will drive them away.

The work progresses with incredible speed as the line moves down the field. In one case a *combite* of between fifty and seventy-five men completely cleared a field of several acres in a single afternoon, and this without undue effort or what appeared to be the expenditure of much energy. The flashing of the hoes in the brilliant sunlight accentuates the color of the scene; each implement is raised high above the head of the one who wields it, to be brought down at the proper in-

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ABOVE, *Preparing the food for a combite feast.*
BELOW, *Drums marking the beat for the hoes.*

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number, exclamations of pleasure were heard that the gods were responding. Outwardly, the ritual seemed completely disorganized, the "*loa*" and the spectators moving, mud-bespattered, tense, from the table for Bosu to that for Simbi, and back, or to the *trône*.

The singing went on without interruption to the accompaniment of the bell and occasional blasts of the whistle. Among the songs heard during this period of possession were:

Bosu li join' qui chose a tè,
Bosu found something on the ground,

Pas remassé li.
Do not pick it up.
Bosu ma'ché,
Bosu goes about,
Li join qui chose a tè',
He found something on the ground,

Pas remassé li.
Do not pick it up.
Un va entrave
You will come to harm
Si ou ramassé li.
If you pick it up.
Va enragé Bosu.
You will anger Bosu.

Simbi en Deux Eaux,
Simbi en Deux Eaux
M'we fé p'ou,
I do for you,
F'e p'moin,
Do for me,
Fi-a, Congo,
Help, O Congo,
Congo Zandor.
Congo Zandor.

Simbi Kita Kita, travaille pour nous,
Simbi Kita Kita, work for us,
Jodi-a pour nous,
Today for us,
Demain pou' zotl'.
Tomorrow for others.

Erzilie, o Lemba,
Erzilie, o Lemba,
M'ap' mandé coté Erzilie ye.
I ask, where is Erzilie.
Mangé a'paré.
The food is ready.

Gedenibo, derrière la croix, Gede,
Gedenibo, behind the cross, Gede.

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before returning for the night's effort. By midnight the dance is in full swing. Though individuals here and there may absent themselves for a time, the attendance remains relatively constant, until as the crowing of cocks marks the approaching dawn, the number of dancers begins to dwindle rapidly, and with full daylight few remain other than members of the family. Only rarely does a *vodun* dance last well into the morning; what one sees after sunrise are the poorer drummers beating their mediocre rhythms for the young people who continue a desultory circling about the central pole. This does not mean that the *vodun* deities shun the daylight. It is merely because the participants must hurry away to get into their Sunday clothes for early mass in the village church.

The obligations of the family giving a dance are clearly established by tradition. Most important is the *tonnelle*, which they must build, and the drums and their accessory gong and rattles, which they must furnish. The drummers are not paid, but are given much attention when the refreshments that must be provided are distributed. These usually take the form of *clairin*, though coffee and bread may also be offered the guests early in the morning. The *clairin*, or raw rum, is passed from time to time, but not in sufficient quantity to cause inebriation. Those who supplement this with a generous supply of their own, and show the effect of it, are regarded with anything but approval.[1] Other accessories for the dance which must be at hand are the banners used to salute the deities, and the candles and water needed to bring those possessed out of the more violent stages of their seizures. If anything else is required or the guests desire further refreshments, these may always be bought from the women who set up their little stands at every dance.

Drums, iron, and rattles are indispensable for a *vodun* dance. The drums, of the characteristic hollow-log African type, tuned with pegs inserted in the sides and reinforced with twine wound about the stretched heads of cow-hide or goat-

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skin, are played in batteries of three, the largest being called *manman*,[3] the middle the *seconde*, and the smallest the *bula*.[4] To be used in dances, the drums, like the *loa* of the worshippers, must be "baptized," as will be seen when an account of their making and consecration is given in a later chapter. The iron, or *ogan*, usually consists of the blade of a hoe struck by a large spike, and the rattle, *açon*, in the form most often encountered, is a rounded calabash, containing seeds or pebbles. The iron and the rattles set the basic, steady beat about which the complex drum rhythms play. The smallest drum first takes the time after the iron and the rattles have begun, the notes being played with an accessory figure by means of two thin sticks. The medium-sized drum is next heard, while the *manman*, ritually the most important of the three, comes in last. The *seconde* also has two sticks, one short, thick, and straight, the other a small bow, which gives an added resilience to the notes of the drums' subsidiary rhythms. In playing the great drum, the single crooked stick, called a *baguette*, is held in the right hand, while the left strikes the drumhead with heel or fingers according to the quality of tone desired. The drumstick itself is wielded either against the skin head or against its wooden side, thus permitting a further variation in tone.

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When "salutes" to the gods are called for by the drums, it is the voice of the *manman* that signals the sweeping circular movements of the dancers, dictating with its beat the dips and semi-prostrations of this figure in the ritual dancing, called *asagwe*. The drum rhythms are always distinctive for each type of *loa*, and every devotee knows the rhythms which call his god.

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The drums and iron are the focus of all activity of the dance, especially since those who are possessed dance facing the drums, in whose beat is heard the voice of the gods. Hence the spectators cluster most closely about them, for anything of significance which happens must happen here. The players of the rattles — it is but rarely that more than one rattle is not

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employed — do not remain with the drummers. These instruments are ordinarily in the hands of *hunsi*, who join the massed ring of dancers that constantly circles about the center pole. These dancers are not under possession, but are merely enjoying the evening or participating in the social aspect of the dance preparatory to becoming possessed. The rattle is held high above the heads of the dancers, and its sharp, steady notes are produced by quick, short, measured movements of the wrist. The end of a song, which sometimes does not come until fifteen or twenty minutes after its initial statement, is usually marked by a continuous shaking of a rattle, a process which effectually breaks the rhythm and makes it possible to begin a new song. The player of the rattle is an outstanding singer, who usually initiates the fresh refrain and continues to sing its repetitions as soloist in the alternation of solo and chorus which marks Haitian *vodun* singing as it marks most West African and New World Negro religious music.

When a possession occurs, the songs for the deity who has "arrived" are taken up as the drums play the rhythm of the god. As his possession comes on, the devotee falls to the ground, rolling before the drums, or staggers blindly about the dancing-space, or otherwise follows the characteristic behavior attributed to his god. After a time he begins to dance, whereupon a *hunsi* or the *hungan*, taking a calabash of water in one hand and a lighted candle in the other, dances opposite him, saluting the god as he performs his every movement in reverse; if he turns clockwise, the one dancing with him turns counter-clockwise; if he moves to the right, the other moves to the left. Except when executing these turns, the functionary of the cult never takes his eyes from the eyes of the possessed person, almost, as it were, hypnotizing him to help him come to himself. Eventually the possessed one recovers sufficiently to take the candle and the calabash of water in his own hands. Often spilling water as he moves, he makes his way to the central pole, pouring an offering and making the sign of the cross with the candle before it.

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have a *hungan* divine its identity so that she might thereafter worship it and be under its protection. As in the other case discussed, the personality involved here is not without interest. The woman was one of the shrewdest traders in the Mirebalais market, and noted for her hardness. Underneath this, however, the presence of much vital energy could be felt as well as a passionate desire for gayety and attention from members of the other sex. That the essential lack of satisfaction of these drives in her life, as discussed and observed, figured in bringing on her possession cannot be doubted, and, as such, throws significant light on the nature of the psychological aspects of the phenomenon.

These instances, however, must not be thought of as a regular part of the ritual of the dances. Though a dance was attended almost every Saturday night during the course of an entire summer, and a number of *services* and other *vodun* rites in addition, these were the only occasions when a *loa bossal* appeared. In order, therefore, to document the pattern of the *vodun* dance that has already been given, some of the dances witnessed may be described in outline.

The first of these is a dance which, originally intended as the culmination of the *service* described in the preceding chapter, failed to fulfill its end because of a quarrel between two important members of the family. None the less, it proved to be one of the most spirited and typical dances witnessed. The habitation, when reached shortly after six o'clock, was deserted, except for a few people who seemed to be waiting disconsolately. Among them were several *hunsi* in white, and two who carried banners, while the three drums, each "dressed" in its skirt-like covering, stood before the entrance, the drumsticks and the *ogan* lying on the *barrière* itself. Since the *hungan* had not arrived, one or two of the men present took charge as darkness came on. Before this dance began, it was necessary to introduce the drums ceremonially into the compound, and as this was the first *vodun* dance after the es-

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AT A VODUN DANCE

ABOVE, *The dancers crowding about the central post of the shelter.*
BELOW, *Drums and drummers.*

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[facing p. 193]

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ABOVE, *At a* vodun *dance: those possessed whirling about the central post.*
BELOW, *Making the* vodun *drum: describing the sign of the cross with lighted candles over the unheaded bodies.*

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[facing P. 244]

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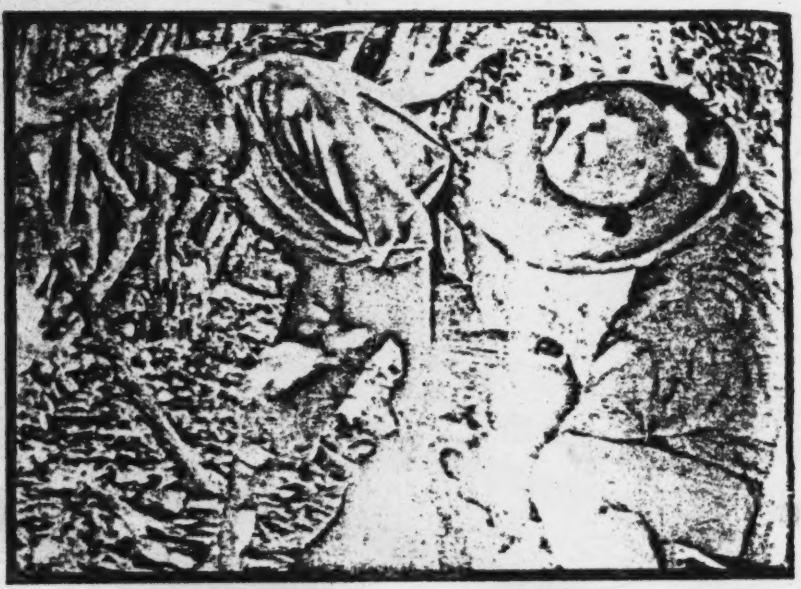

ABOVE, *Making the* vodun *drum: stretching the cow-hide heads.*
BELOW, *Consecrating the drums: they must be "dressed," like anyone who is baptized.*

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is ruled by God, it is necessary to invoke God with the ritual of His Church before the rites to placate the *loa* may begin. But the important business of the occasion is to placate the *loa*, and it is only when the *hungan* takes over from the *prêt' savanne* that the series of rituals commence which, for the Haitian, hold emotional force and psychological value.

In the description of the baptism of a *loa* given in a preceding chapter, the use of Church ritual in bringing the African spirits under control will be remembered. No clearer illustration can be given of this merging of traditions than in a detailed account of the manner of making and validating *vodun* drums. These drums are of the characteristic African hollow-log type, with skin heads held in place and tuned by means of pegs, which are tied fast about the drumhead with cord. Before the tree which furnished the bodies was cut, an invocation was pronounced by their maker and an offering — a *mangé sec* — was made, that all the gods might come when called by the finished drums. A candle was lighted and *verver* described about the base of the tree. Eggs, broken against the trunk, were rubbed on the bark; while both soft and alcoholic drinks were given as libations, since not all the gods desire the same refreshment. After the tree had been felled and that part of the trunk that was needed for the drums was cut off, the maker was free to proceed with shaping the bodies of the drums by first gouging out the inside of the trunk, then stripping the bark, and finally carving the characteristic foot at the base. Before the next step of boring the holes for the pegs was taken, *clairin* was poured inside each drum, at the entrance to the habitation of the maker, and toward the man's cornfield. The first hole bored in each drum was carefully marked, for this was the significant *manman*. Here the first peg is inserted; the skin head is first attached here; and here the cord about the head is first knotted; while it is the peg in this hole that must always be first struck when the completed drum is tuned.

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534 782 798 The drumheads were cut from a large ox-hide, purchased in the market place. In the early morning sunlight another "little ceremony" was performed before they were attached. Placing the three unheaded bodies of the drums in a row, with the iron in its place, the maker poured *clairin* before each, and having cut a native candle in three pieces, he took them in his left hand as he crossed himself, saying: "*Au nom d' Père, au nom d' Fils, au nom d' Saint Esprit.*" He then [788] lighted the three wicks, and taking each lighted candle in turn in his right hand, he made the sign of the cross with it and attached it to the "mother peg" of each drum. There the flames were allowed to flicker for a moment before the work of heading the drums began.

534 The hide was first attached to the "mother peg," then to the one opposite, and then to the two at right angles to the first pair. This is hard work, for to obtain the proper degree of initial tautness several men must strain at the resistant hide, and that is why four cuts are made where a peg is to go instead of the three that are needed, for frequently a strip breaks and the extra hole is used to re-thread the peg. The great drum has nine pegs, the one of medium size seven, and the small one six, not five, "because the *boula* is a thief, taking the beat away from the iron." The head was cut away from the rest of the great ox-hide only after it was in place. The final step was to knot the cord — braided the day before, of native sisal — to the *manman* peg of each drum, and then to twine it eight, six, or five times about their bodies.

534 798 788 The drums, now finished, were then put aside for a week to allow the damp heads to dry, awaiting the final sanctification. During this period they could not be played. It was held unwise to do more than tap them lightly with the finger-nail to test their resonance and the extent to which the heads were dry. Meanwhile preparations were being made for the bap- [292] tism. Drums, like human beings, must be clothed when they appear in public, and *rades*, apron-like garments, a white bro-

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cade for Damballa, a red print for Ogun, and a third, a flowered blue material, for all the other gods, were first made. They were ruffled at the bottom, with strips of the material, attached as are apron-strings, to hold them in place. Four eggs, three "native" candles, three white candles, white flour, corn flour, two cassava cakes, two biscuits, three small-sized loaves of bread, two bottles of *kola, clairin,* and holy water, were also provided for the baptism. Finally on the appointed day — a Saturday, so that the drums could afterwards be used for a *vodun* dance — the drums, drumsticks, and iron, with the dresses and the food that had been provided for the ceremony, were taken to the scene of the rite, a habitation where a *tonnelle* had been built for the accompanying dance.

The ceremony began at about five o'clock in the afternoon, the drums being dressed by their godmothers. Just as a child who is to be baptized in church must have godparents, so drums must have their godparents, and following the logic of this position, since the owner of the drums is regarded as their father, he uses the terms *compère* and *commère* for those who have "stood up" with his drums, just as he would for those who might sponsor his children. The *prêt' savanne* first called for some twigs from an orange tree and a bit of cotton, as the drums, standing on end, were covered with a clean white cloth. Grouped about them and ranged behind the officiant were the owner and godparents of the drums, holding lighted candles in their hands, with which they made the sign of the cross from time to time. As the prayers began, the participants crossed themselves, and the *prêt' savanne* sprinkled the drums with holy water, using a spray of orange-leaves. Among his prayers were the Credo, the Ave Maria, the Pater Noster, and the Salve, interspersed with hymns sung by the assembled group. After about half an hour of prayer the officiant, holding an egg in his hand, made the sign of the cross three times over each of the drumheads. Ordinarily the eggs would have been broken, their contents rubbed on the drum-

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heads, and *clairin* poured over these, but on this occasion the rite was postponed, for the eggs would have dampened the drumheads so they could not have been played for the evening's dance. Yet this deviation from the strict ritual did not permit any laxity in meeting the obligation when promised — that is, the day following the dance.

The *hungan* took charge as soon as the prayers were finished. Placing the drums to form a triangle on the ground, with the iron, rattles, and sticks near by, he put the offerings inside the space enclosed by the bodies, and with white cornmeal made *verver* about them, while at the foot of each drum he placed an egg; then, covering the drums with a clean cloth, he threw parched corn on it. From time to time he interrupted his silent invocations by ringing a bell held in one hand, until the arrival of the time for the vehement haggling over the price of his services, which interrupted the ritual. This matter settled, he asked for the names to be given the drums, and proceeded to "christen" the small one Gran' Siligbo, the middle-sized Damballa, and the great drum Ogun Shango. At this point, were the owner desirous of having special powers given his drums, as is frequently the case, the *hungan* would endow them with a *n'âme,* or soul, at the same time instructing the spirit of the drums, called *huntôr,* in what was desired of it, and prescribing what must be given the drums by their owner to make their powers effective. But in this case no such *n'âme* was asked, and the ceremony continued.

Summoning the gods, he lifted the cloth over the drums and instructed the "father" to pour water in three places between them, to set the drums on end, and to beat one of them. This was the *seconde,* called Damballa, and its having been initially struck indicated that the god after whom it was named was most important for this set. This ended the ceremony of baptism, and the drummers took charge so that the evening's dance might begin, for now the drums were ready

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for all uses to which those of their type are put. During their making and after their completion they had been sanctified by rites that vividly illustrate the merging of traditions in Haitian religion: by means of offerings to the African gods, and through baptism by the rites of the Church.[3]

The *action de grâce* is another integral part of *vodun* ceremonialism that is essentially Catholic, since its lengthy service is composed entirely of prayers and hymns of the Church. As has been shown, the *action de grâce*, which precedes a *vodun service*, takes place before an "altar" which, important both then and at the later, more African rites, in itself documents in no small measure the combining of Catholicism and *vodun*. One, employed at a *service* not described in the earlier chapters, was covered with a red and white checked table-cloth, on top of which a smaller white cloth was spread.* Pinned to the canopy and to the front of the table-cloth were various chromolithographs of the saints; St. Michael attacking the Devil, Mater Dolorosa, St. James, the Virgin Mary and Jesus (the Assumption), and St. Expeditius. In front of the representation of St. James stood a crucifix with the figure of Jesus, in accordance with the custom of never omitting to have one of these at any *vodun* ceremonial. The table bore many offerings; at the back were four bottles of soft drinks, with cups; while also to be seen were several hard rolls, an ear of corn, a dish containing eggs, and another holding, among other things, rice. One of the containers on the table held holy water, while candles for use both in the *action de grâce* and in the later *vodun* rituals lay beside this. Thus crucifix, candles, pictures of the saints, and holy water were combined in this ceremony with offerings of food and drink to be given the gods that the ancestors had brought from Africa.[4] The songs sung at the voduistic portions of these *services* also reflect the psychological unity of Catholic and African elements in *vodun* worship. One of these declares:

* This altar is shown in the illustration facing p. 192.

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ABOVE, *Consecrating the drums: the "godfathers" and "godmothers" standing by with lighted candles as prayers of the Church are recited.*

BELOW, *The* vodun *priest employing African rites to complete the consecration of the drums.*

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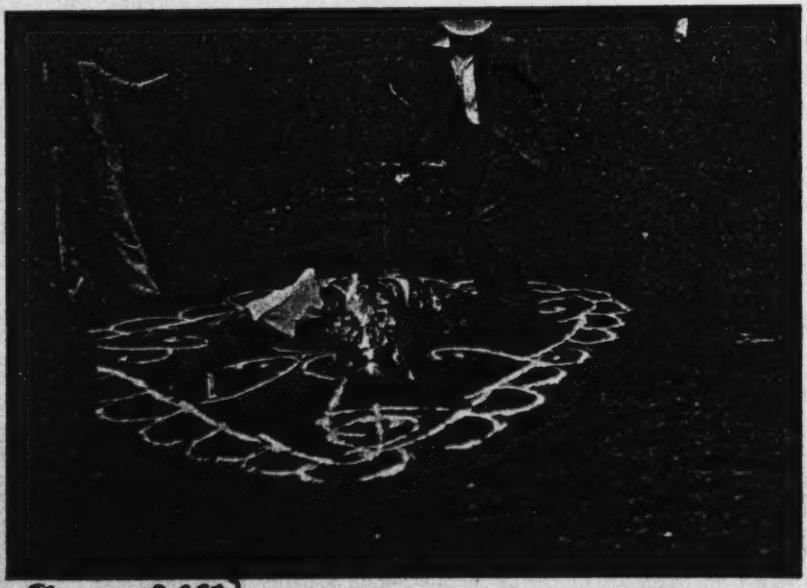

[facing P. 282]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

in many details. But, in general, the cult establishment consists of a central building of one or more rooms with an adjoining court, or peristyle, over which there is a covering—usually a straw roof. The covering, called the *tonnelle,* is supported by a number of poles, one of which is placed squarely in the center of the court. This center pole—the *po'teau mitan* or *po'teau planté*—is the focus of most of the ritual activities. The loa who descend upon the service enter by way of this pole. The ritual *vèvèt,* or flour paintings, are made at its foot. Around it all the dancing takes place. On certain rare occasions when rituals are held in the open, a carefully selected tree becomes the center post—though it is by no means certain that the po'teau mitan is not, in fact, a symbolic tree.

The building adjoining the peristyle contains the inner sanctum. Here are deposited the paraphernalia of the [illegible], such as ritual bottles and jars, flags of the société, and the iron kettles used in various ceremonies. On the walls there may be primitive paintings of the special loa of the hounfor, or perhaps of his symbol. The loa of the sea, Agwé, may be represented by a ship. Damballa, the serpent-rainbow loa, may be represented by a snake or a rainbow. Usually there are colored lithographs of Catholic saints, who have both Catholic and African names. And there are hand-beaten iron crosses, dishes containing Indian celts in which loa are believed to reside, gourd bowls, and carved wooden double and triple bowls used for services to dead twins and triplets. Upon the altar place, called *badji,* there are the *criches* or *govis,* earthen jars or bottles in which rest the loa removed from the heads of people who have died. Sometimes special niches are built on the hounfor grounds for the deities. Each cult priest designs his hounfor in his own way.

A hounfor belonging to a mambo near the town of Croix des Missions gave the appearance of having a large and prosperous société. Under the tonnelle eight beautifully carved Arada drums were suspended from a single peg. At a respectable distance hung a Martinique drum used only for dances on the occasion of a Nine Night. Inside the hounfor was an impressive display of sacred objects and decorations. One corner of the room was reserved for Symbi Yendézo, a patron loa of drinking water and rainfall. He was portrayed on the wall as a long, thin snake crawling in a maze of crosses. On the ground beneath the picture was a small concrete pool, in which two water snakes swam. Another corner was reserved for Agwé, and on his wall was a picture of a steamship. Along the back of the altar was an impressive array of govis, containing the spirits removed from the heads of deceased persons. There was a large plate of loa stones, and various protective charms stood near by. Flags and sabres

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

kola (a soft drink), *clairin*, and syrup. The houngan, entreating Chébo to accept, poured a little *clairin* into the hole. The loa seemed to accept, for the *clairin* was quickly absorbed in the ground. The houngan took rice from the plate with his fingers, about the amount he might place in his own mouth, and put it gently into the hole. He was feeding Papa Chébo, literally placing the food in his mouth. After the rice, which was dry, the houngan poured in a little more *clairin* to moisten it. He ordered the laplace to break up the bread, and then he placed a small piece in the hole and washed it down with a little rum. The houngan seemed to understand that Papa Chébo Profiel was hungry, and that he was also an epicure. He allowed him to taste the roasted corn, and then washed it down with a trickle of kola. Then he gave him a taste of the roasted peanuts, and another morsel of bread. Once Chébo got his mouth too full in his zest for the meal, and the assemblage had to wait for him to finish "coughing." Then the houngan gave him a long drink of kola to clear his windpipe. After that the houngan was more careful in the way he fed him—a little cassava, a drink, a little bread. As the houngan fed the loa, some of the spectators reached over and placed small coins in the empty dish by the hole. These too were for Chébo. Finally, Chébo was through eating. The food was gone.

The houngan, shaking his rattle and his bell, blew two sharp notes on his whistle. At the door of the hounfor appeared l'Autorité, the hounsi possessed by Papa Chébo. More than ever she resembled the loa, and less than ever she resembled herself. In one hand she held a saber. Her bodily movements were spasmodic, as though she was being forced to do things to which she was not accustomed. She moved slowly into the circle, her eyes almost closed; she leaned backward, then twisted grotesquely around, jerked this way and that, buffeted by the loa. Suddenly she began to whirl. The houngan called "Tambouyé!" and the drummers beat a slow complicated rhythm, a salute to Chébo. The loa had really "entered" now. There was no mistaking the jerky, irresponsible movements of the hounsi's head and shoulders. She leaned backward as though about to fall, incredibly kept her balance, rolled forward as though she were going to plunge to the ground, and twisted herself upright once more. The saber passed close to the faces of the spectators, even scratched some of them and cut their clothing. Her movements had a definitely masculine character. Chébo Profiel was a man.

She reached over to seize a chicken that was held out to her. Grasping its legs with her free hand, she continued her spinning, twisting, lurching dance. Then she cradled the chicken, rocking it back and forth until it was in a hypnotic trance. She placed it on the ground before a tiny pile

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

Oh, a day will come when they will remember me here, *kélé manyan!*
Oh, Damballa Wèdo *é, kélé manyan.*
Oh, Ayida Wèdo *é, kélé manyan!*
Oh, a day will come for you to remember me here, *kélé manyan!*

During the evening about twenty loa and ancestors came into the *caye* to talk. When the last had finished speaking the hills were already light, and the service was over.

Service for Èzilie Fréda and St. Jacques Majeur

This service took place not in the open but under a tonnelle surrounded by four walls, adjoining the hounfor of Alexis Stephan on the west fringes of Port-au-Prince. Separate from the hounfor and dance court was a shrine to the "dead" loa Gèdé Nimbo. The shrine was a small shed open on one side. Within, lighted by flickering oil lamps, was a life-size effigy of Gèdé, a scarecrow-like figure dressed in the loa's traditional attire—black tail coat and trousers, and a tall opera hat. On the otherwise blank face of the figure were smoked glasses with white rims.

The dancing was progressing under the supervision of the houngan's adjutant, the laplace. He wandered among the drummers and dancers, encouraged the singing, and issued orders here and there. No one seemed to take him very seriously. There was a good deal of joking, and the gathering seemed very much like an old-fashioned family reunion. There were perhaps a hundred dancers and spectators—friends, relatives, and devotees of Stephan's hounfor. Everyone was watching with affection an old woman who could not be restrained from dancing. She executed old classical steps and postures with a skill that called for running comment all around her. As each piece came to an end someone would step up to her and say something like: "Woy, Manman, mais ou passé mwé!" (Oh, Mother, you are better than me!). Then they would attempt to get her to sit down again, but she would only shake them off and urge the drummers to get going if they were not too tired.

Eventually, the houngan, Stephan, made a casual entrance through the door of his adjoining hounfor. He held the usual ritual rattle and bell in his hand, and sauntered around to chat with his friends.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, the dancing became more serious. Soon, only the hounsi, the female servitors, were dancing. The drums played a salute to Legba, the first loa to be called upon in a Vodoun service. For it is Legba who opens all gates and all highways, and who paves the way for communication with other deities. Though he is not the greatest of the loa, he is one of the most ancient. The houngan spilled water on the ground as a libation, and the dancing continued.

2: Courlander 8-3 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

celebrated with elaborate rituals for the dead. As in Haiti, great importance is laid on the presence of all living descendants, whose numbers are calculated to influence the ancestors' behavior. And as in Haiti, the first yams and the first rice are offered to the dead, and only after the family ritual does the family divide the crop.[5]

Service for the Assotor Drum

The *assotor* drum is the largest and most sacred of all Haitian drums. Around it is built an impressive and elaborate service known as the *mangé assotor*, which, according to local traditions and circumstances, may be held as often as every three years or as infrequently as every twenty-one years. The period between mangés always consists of an odd number of years. A houngan from Jérémie declared the service might properly be held every three, five, or seven years. Another cult priest in the Cul-de-Sac Plain said it could be held every seven, seventeen, or twenty-one years. The assotor is known as the *plus grand moune* (the most venerable "man") of the hounfor. However, few cult centers possess an assotor. "Assotor c'est fort bagaille, c'est pas zaffai tout moune" (The assotor is powerful, it isn't everybody's affair), Haitians say. This is what a man from Jérémie tells about it:

"The assotor is the greatest of all things in the hounfor. The Rada drums are only for the Dahomey nation. The Congo drums are for the Congo nation. The assotor is a man of Dahomey, but he is for all nations. It is for all loa—Pétro, Congo, Bumba, Dahomey. The assotor belongs to Dahomey, but when there is a great service the assotor is the host to the loa of every rite, the loa of Haiti and of Africa. When the assotor is played, the loa are awakened everywhere. Loa who have been forgotten by the Creoles (Haitians) will come to the service and mount people, and when the loa have gone, many people don't know what loa has been riding them. Some ancient spirits from far away come only to the assotor service, and when it is over they aren't heard of again.

"The assotor drum is not for small things, it is for great occasions. For some people there are no occasions in their whole lives great enough for an assotor service. When all other things have failed, it is only then that the assotor is called upon.

"If a big houngan should have an assotor drum, he can have only one, and it is the chief of the hounfor. All other drums are its servants. You can make an assotor, but it is not necessarily an assotor. It may look like an assotor and not be an assotor. To be an assotor it must not only have the shape of an assotor but it must be accepted by the loa. There was a houngan near Jérémie who made an assotor and held a great service with it,

[5] [Informant: Albert Kofi Prempeh, Ghana. Cf. p. 351, category 116. -- Analyst]

2: Courlander B-S (1937-1965) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

534 796 798 787 but it wasn't a genuine assotor and the loa didn't come. The drummer beat the assotor, but none of the loa came. As he played, the stick kept falling out of his hand. This was a bad signal (omen). None of the people got loa in their heads. The houngan was in a great sweat, but nothing happened. Another houngan came after the third day and told him to bring the service to an end. He did that. They threw the false assotor away and no one would touch it.

534 796 798 782 787 [796] "To make an assotor, there is first a service. The houngan goes into the woods to find a great tree that is suitable. The trunk must be big enough so that the drum is at least as tall as a man. Most assotors are six feet high or more. The houngan must buy the tree from Maît' Grand Bois, the loa who is Master of the Forest. There is a service under the tree, a goat or a bull is killed, and the houngan places money on the ground for Maît' Grand Bois. Then Maît' Grand Bois mounts his horses. He enters the head of the houngénicon or the laplace. Sometimes he rides the houngan himself. He is very rough with his horses. But if he accepts the money, the houngan has the tree cut down, and he has an assotor drum made. When the drum is finished, a special stick must be made to beat it. Again they go to the woods. They carry the great assotor drum with them. There is singing but no dancing or drumming. They find a tree from which they will cut the drumstick, and there is a service. The houngan must buy the branch from which the drumstick will be made. He offers money to Maît' Grand Bois, the same as before. He spills a little water on the ground for Maît' Grand Bois. He holds a candle in his hand. They sing to Maît' Grand Bois to let them have the stick. Maît' Grand Bois is the master of all the trees, but he is thinking also of the other loa and how they feel about it. On the Island Below the Water he consults with them. If he agrees to give the stick, he makes it known by mounting some of the hounsi, or the houngan, or maybe the man who will be the special assotor drummer. Then they cut down the branch and make the drumstick.

534 798 796 "The assotor drum is not dedicated to Ogoun or Èzilie or any other single loa. If it is baptized, it is given its own name, Assotor. The spirit of the assotor is multiple, for it is the *rappel* for all loa everywhere. The spirit of the assotor is called Assotor, and it is a kind of loa, but it is not one loa but all loa.

534 796 798 796 "In the assotor service, all loa come. Ogoun, Damballa, Legba, Tijean Pétro, Dan Pétro, Gèdé, Maît' Cimitière, they all come. The big loa come and the little loa, the chiefs and their escortes. Every big loa has an escorte of twenty-one smaller loa. Some of the smaller loa have their own escortes. Damballa comes crawling like a snake. Makanda comes crawling like a snake. Ogoun comes fighting, chewing on nails or anything iron. Badé

2: Courlander B-8 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

comes quietly. Pié Cassé comes crawling because of his broken feet. Each loa comes in his own way.

"First there is dancing for the Congo and Pétro loa. There is dancing for the Kanga and Ibo nation. Last of all is Dahomé, for the assotor belongs to the Dahomé nation, and Dahomé is the host.

"The assotor service is the biggest of all services. It last fifteen days. Old people say that once there were services lasting more than twenty days. Every day, animals are killed—bulls, goats, pigs, chickens, turkeys—all according to the loa who are there to be fed. When Moundongue is fed, a dog's ears are clipped in his honor, because Moundongue is fond of dogs. More happens in the assotor mangé than all the rest of the year. Dahomé is host to the other nations, so the Rada service comes last. But the assotor drum is the host even to Dahomé, and it is fed last of all.

"The assotor drum is dressed in the finest of clothing and kerchiefs during the mangé. It is the king of everything.

"When the mangé assotor is ended, when the drum has been fed, there is an immediate Mass held in church for the souls in purgatory. You don't need to have any special reason, but you must hold the Mass for all the dead. You serve coffee, sandwiches, cake, and other refreshments for all the people.

"When there is no mangé going on, the assotor is kept in a special place in the hounfor. Every seven or nine months the houngan has a special *rappel* beaten for it on the Rada drums, and rum is spilled on the ground for it. It is a great responsibility to own an assotor. But it does great things for the houngan who owns it."[A]

Service for Mait' Grand Bois at Anse-à-Veau

Orthodox tradition in the region of Anse-à-Veau places the loa Mait' Grand Bois as the most potent and venerable of deities. He is the supreme mystère, whose good will or eccentric whim determines the fortunes of all men. Somewhat subsidiary to Grand Bois, but served within the same rites, are two other non-Dahomé loa—Moundongue (of Congo origin) and Ibo. Older people of Anse-à-Veau regard this trilogy, along with Femme Grand Bois (the wife of Mait' Grand Bois), as the core of "Guinée" ritual. There is also a second group of deities, consisting primarily of Ogoun Feraille, Ézilie, and Fréda Dahomé; these loa are of the Dahomey family and are regarded as somewhat less important. Should services for any of them be held, they follow rites for the Grand Bois constellation. People in this region hold that there is only one Ibo loa, one Moundongue, one Ogoun, and one Ézilie, each of them with many names or manifestations. Legba, the Dahomean spirit of procreation,

[A] [For footnote, see Category 116, P. 351. --Analyst]

S. Courlander B-4 (1907-1965) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

others only half believe, and many look upon these creatures as imaginary but exciting to talk about.

The zombie finds a favored place in the tales children make up to tell one another, and the traditional song played by children on the earth bow or mosquito drum goes:

Maringouin pinga zombie oh, Bobo Maria!
Maringouin pinga zombie!
Maringouin pinga zombie, pinga zombie, pinga zombie, pinga zombie, pinga zombie!
Maringouin pinga zombie! [Ex. 92]

Mosquito beware the zombie, oh, Bobo Maria!
Mosquito beware the zombie!
Mosquito beware the zombie, beware the zombie, beware the zombie, beware the zombie, beware the zombie!
Mosquito beware the zombie!

Or they may sing with great bravado, to the clapping of hands.

Chaingadaing, nou pral mangé zombie!
Chaingadaing, trau trau!
Chaingadaing, nou pral mangé zombie!
Chaingadaing, colocoto!
Chaingadaing, nou pral mangé zombie!
Chaingadaing, kalsinkaintaing! [Ex. 93]

Chaingadaing, we are going to eat a zombie!
Chaingadaing, trau trau!
Chaingadaing, we are going to eat a zombie!
Chaingadaing, colocoto!
Chaingadaing, we are going to eat a zombie!
Chaingadaing, kalsinkaintaing!

2; Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

and covered with tiny mirrors or bits of colored glass. The towering headdress of antlers or papier-mâché sculpture unavoidably recalls similar headdresses in West Africa. Each roi has his own style of dance, which is usually accompanied by drums. It may be a belly dance, a dance of delicate balance, or one of complicated footwork and semiacrobatics such as the imitation of a pair of scissors at work. Throughout the dancing the headdress remains majestically erect.

In addition to the roi Lwalwali and the mâit' Rara (who is constantly in the midst of things, blowing his whistle), there are other traditional Rara personalities: the *major jonc*, who juggles with a metal baton (sometimes two or three of these jugglers work together), and the *jongleur*, a juggler or strong man who performs such feats as dancing while holding a fully set table off the ground with his teeth.

On the southwest peninsula, in the region around Jérémie, there is a splurge of wrestling exhibitions during Rara days. Known as *pingé*, this festival wrestling is done with a background of excited drumming and has a striking resemblance to wrestling traditions in West Africa. Local "champions" will invade a neighboring community, sometimes traveling considerable distances to make a challenge. As in West Africa, some of these wrestlers take their own musicians with them. The musicians often are provided by the village in which the events take place. If a challenge is accepted, the spectators form a large circle, with the wrestlers in the center and the musicians to one side. There may be drums and bamboo flutes, occasionally supplemented by large earthern jars and lengths of bamboo beaten with sticks. The wrestlers are dressed only in shorts. When a man is thrown, the event is over, and another pair of wrestlers takes over. Sometimes a "champion" will take on a series of opponents until he is tired. Afterward he may move on to another community to find new competition, perhaps accompanied by a large group of friends and supporters from his own village. When the Rara season comes to an end, pingé is over for the year. It is one of the few athletic sport activities of the Haitian peasant.

And now and then during Rara a *debois* is seen. The *debois* is a carved wooden marionette with a short handle below. Its arms and legs are moved by pulling a string. It is usually painted, and sometimes it is dressed. One debois observed was provided with a loose dresslike costume; when the string was pulled, a large phallus hinged into view in an erect position. This marionette was an object of endless funmaking among spectators.[2]

Another type of marionette is the "Two Kings," made of papier-mâché and operated with strings. The "Two Kings," sitting in a papier-

2 [Footnote appears in Category 116, P. 351. --Analyst]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

mâché carriage or on papier-mâché horses, make their appearance during Rara as well as on the Day of the Kings (*Les Rois*).

Among the traditional paraphernalia carried by Rara groups are cocomacaque sticks, cha-cha rattles, metal rattles called *tchancy*, a set of rattles on a tall thin pole (called *jonconjon*), candelabra bearing candles or oil lamps (*lampions*), banners and flags, and such miscellaneous musical instruments as the *grage* scraper, bamboo scraping devices, the *batse* finger drum, *assots* (beating boards), and various kinds of secular drums.

The general tone of Rara is nonreligious. The dancing is free from the decorous restraints which characterize most religious ritual, and some early observers of the festival were shocked by what they saw. Some of them went so far as to attribute Haiti's dense population to the "licentious activities" and reckless abandon of the spring carnival. The Catholic Church and some political administrators have sporadically sought to suppress Rara, along with Vodoun ritual. And even today in Port-au-Prince the foreign visitor often is urged to watch the elite Mardi Gras with its floats and mulatto queens as a substitute.

Although Rara has an over-all tone of secular abandon, it has links with both Catholic and Vodoun ritual. Good Friday is given over in good measure to miming the story of Jesus and Judas. A perambulating band may carry an effigy of Judas hanging from a pole. Another will burn the Judas effigy, or drag it in the dust as the crowd moves along the road. In another group a man playing the part of Judas may crawl on his hands and knees along the trail, while Jesus' avengers pursue him with long, cracking whips.

Tying in with Vodoun ritual, virtually all Rara drums and other paraphernalia are "dedicated" or "rededicated" before Lent in special hounfor services. And on the last day of Rara, usually late in the night, prayers are said, the loa are called upon, and some of the festive paraphernalia is thrown into a fire to be consumed.

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41. *Vodoun drummers, northern Haiti. The drums are characteristic of that region. The boy at left, although only twelve or thirteen years old, is an accomplished drummer.*

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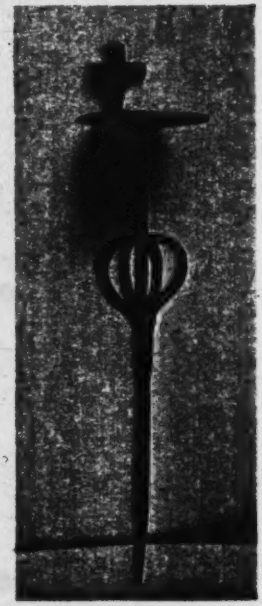
[776]

42. Forged iron "saber" of the loa Damballa, from a hounfor near Léogane. Height, 32 inches.



43. Forged iron standard for holding ritual objects, from a hounfor in the region of Léogane. Height, 18 inches.

[532]
[776]

44. Ancient iron figure of the loa Quançon Fer, from a hounfor near Léogane. Height, 12 inches.

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45. Old iron ritual bell, or ogan, from a hounfor in southern Haiti. Height, 11 inches.

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7. *A small coumbite, northern Haiti.*

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8. *Coumbite, southern Haiti. Vaccine players at the right; flag of the socialist at the left.*

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9. *Calling the coumbite: signaling on a conch-shell trumpet.*

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10. *A women's coumbite weeding a cornfield near the town of Plaisance.*

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[P. 112 - MM]

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69. Rara dancing near Gonaives. Vaccine players are at the left.

70. A Rara group near Port-au-Prince. At the left are the baka drum and a tymbale. One of the four vaccines, center, is made of metal. Behind the musicians are the society's flag and a lampion.

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26. Service for the loa Agwé in a boat at sea. In the center, two houngi hold the société's flags. Between them and the houngan is the bedecked barque d'Agwé, a raftlike miniature vessel which will be set adrift. An ogan and a drum are at the lower right.

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79 and 80. *Playing the tambour maringouin, or mosquito drum. Beneath the earth bow is a portable variant. The player plucks the string with one hand and with the other varies the pitch by pressure on the end of the bow.*

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81. *A miniature brass casting, an Ashanti gold weight, in the form of a spring snare used for catching small game. The device can be recognized as an antecedent of the Haitian portable mosquito drum.*

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

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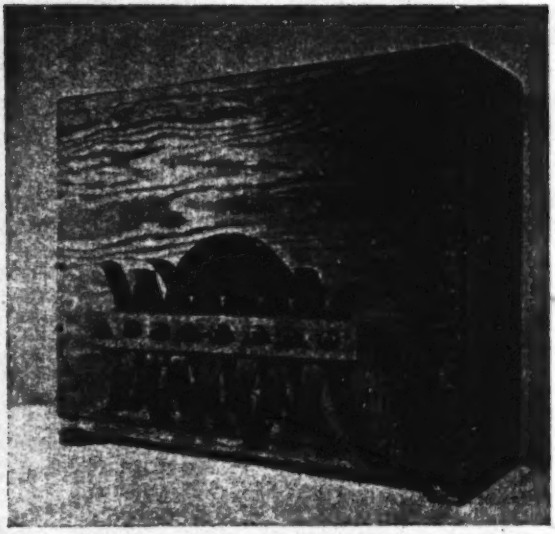
82. *Playing the tikambas, or bamboo stampers.*

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3
[P. 112-UU]

● 534



83. *Haitian marimbula with keys made of steel springs. Height of box, approximately 18 inches, width 24 inches. The player sits on the box and plays the keys with his finger tips. Compare with nos. 84 and 85.*

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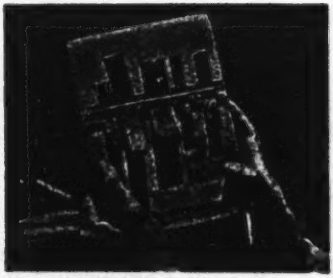
84. *A simple African sansa, or likembe, played with the thumbs. This one is from the Topoke people in the Congo.*



85. *A marimbula from Cuba, still small enough to play with the thumbs in the manner of its African prototype. The heavy steel springs are like those on the Haitian instrument.*

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86. *The dentlé, or notched scraping stick.*

87. *Sacred calabash rattle from northern Haiti.*

88. *The tchancy, a metal rattle used chiefly for secular music.*

[778]

89. *A houngan's asson, showing network of beads and snake bones.*

90. *A ka drum, showing method of lacing and the sliding rope tighteners.*

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3
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33. *An ancient assotor drum, believed to have been made early in the nineteenth century. Seen faintly on the painted surface are a guinea hen and a palm tree.*

34. *An assotor drum in full regalia for a service in the Cul-de-Sac Plain.*

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2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

compensated by a "feast" and party given at the end of the day by the host. More usual than the *corvée* is the regular sharing of work on one another's fields—the *ronde*, or "taking turns."

An early morning work gathering is known as a *dourant jou'*. It meets early in the day, sometimes before dawn, continues until ten or eleven in the morning, when the sun becomes hot, and then disperses. An afternoon coumbite is called a *diné-machete* (dinner machete) and lasts from about two in the afternoon until early evening. When the work is finished, the men go to the house of the host, where they have dinner, much in the manner of the American threshing party. An all-day affair is called a grand coumbite.

Essential to all coumbites are musicians and singing leaders. The instruments used are various, according to local custom. In the south they are usually drums, *tymbales*, and bamboo trumpets. In some areas of the north, the *lambi*, or conch-shell trumpet, is favored.

According to the custom in the south, on the day of the coumbite the drummers arise in the false dawn before sunrise and begin a roundabout march to the home of the host. They pass before the huts of all the neighbors who are going to join the party, playing a *rappel* on the drums. By one's and two's the workers come down the trails to join the procession, bringing hoes, machetes, or sickles as required. As the marching group grows larger, there is talking, laughter, and perhaps singing. Most of the men who join the procession are from close by. Others who may have to travel from a distance, perhaps from the next valley, go directly to the house of the host. When the workers arrive there, the women of the house serve coffee. This is the usual breakfast of the Haitian peasant.

Then the drummers play another *rappel*, and the men go down to the field that is to be tilled. There may be ten, twenty, or fifty of them. Some coumbites are even larger. If the group is a small one, the men line up together. The singing leader, called a *samba* or *simidor*, begins a song, the drummers play, the hoes begin to rise and fall in unison, and the workers join in the singing. If the group is large it will divide into two or three squads, each trying to outdo the other. The men stand shoulder to shoulder, moving the hoes up and down together, syncopating their movements by pauses as they sing their responsive parts. Sometimes tafia or rum is portioned out. The squads move forward slowly, inching their way across the field. The samba beats on his hoe blade with a stone to keep time for his song. His job is to "encourage" the men. He may sing old familiar songs or compose new ones, songs with humor and bite in them, ribald songs, and songs of ridicule. They may criticize

And when the revolution came he produced for the Haitian armies knives, gun parts, and wheels to transport cannon. By the tens of thousands he made ingeniously devised metal objects to be thrown on the roads, before the French cavalry troops—objects so shaped that, no matter how they fell, a single sharp point stood erect to cripple the enemy horses. Yet knowledge of the West African uses of iron did not altogether disappear, and during the first century of independence the Haitian blacksmith created many old-style knives, spears, and ritual objects for the cult temple.

Even today, some of this old-style work is to be found in hounfors in the southwestern peninsula. One may see simple or ornate iron standards, made to support ceremonial offerings or candles, strikingly similar to standards in ancestral shrines in Dahomey. There are iron bells, both single and double, made in pure West African style; ornate ritual swords and sabers which are the crests of certain deities; coiled and uncoiled iron serpents representing the gods Damballa and Ayida; and stylized or semirealistic portraits of the deities. Many of these old pieces are nineteenth-century survivals; others have been forged within the past decade. ⁂

An over-all impression of Haitian material culture is that artistic decoration is almost entirely absent and that the prime emphasis is on utility. Wooden cooking spoons are efficient in form, but missing from them is the delicate decorative carving often found in West Africa. The long wooden washing bowl, or *gamelle,* and the wooden mortar in which grain is pulverized are likewise clean-cut but stark and plainly utilitarian. Clay bowls, bottles, and storage jars are usually of simple, uniform design, with only accidental variations; there is little use of glazes, and the clay is often heavy and thick. Should there be a wari gameboard in the peasant hut, the chances are that it is roughly made, without legs or carved designs. Dugout canoes are usually crude in appearance, heavy and thick-walled, and irregular in form.

Yet there are many evidences—though one must seek them out—that esthetic impulses are quite alive. The gay peasant straw knapsack, or *alfor,* without which no mountain man makes a journey, has a charm and grace that is not diminished by familiarity and cheapness. Decorated with sisal braid and tassels, and colored with green and magenta dyes, each *alfor* on close inspection appears to be unique. In some communities in the south and southwest, burlap squares also are painted with these traditional dyes. About forty inches across, and made of sugar bags, these paintings swarm with geometric patterns and sometimes with figures of flowers and animals. They are purely decorative, being

⁂ [See plates 42-51, pp. 112-DD—112-FF.--Analyst]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

used for wall hangings much as appliquéd cloths are used in Dahomey. Near Cap Haitien, in the north, ceramic workers make crude clay figurines of roosters, pigs, dogs, cows, and people. The "purpose" of these figurines is obscure, but it is likely that they are intended for use in Vodoun ritual, a number of them having been observed in hounfors in the vicinity of the town of Grande Rivière du Nord. In some mountain villages, canes carved with animal and human heads are commonly seen. Nor is the tradition of carving gourds and calabashes, popular in various regions of West Africa, altogether forgotten. The *cayambouque*, a divided calabash with the top ingeniously cut to fit into the lower part so as to form a sealed container, is sometimes covered with carved geometric designs, usually crude and haphazard but on occasion meticulous. Until recent years the common *cha-cha*, or gourd rattle, was similarly carved.

Most of the visible traditional art is to be found in the environs of the cult temple. The inner walls of many hounfors are covered with ritual designs and symbols and portraits of the deities. On the altar, sometimes, crude wood carvings of deities are seen, along with forged iron objects, carved marassa bowls, and grotesquely shaped drumsticks known as *baguettes guinée*. All the wooden objects are characterized by a plainness that relegates them to the category of purely functional and expendable things. The wood carving of a deity is not an image, it is a representation; it can be sold or otherwise disposed of, even thrown away if infested with beetles, and another object can be used to replace it. The only concern of the cult priest in this matter is that the deity concerned should understand the situation properly and not take offense. Thus there is no strong feeling that the wood carving should be a realistic representation or that it should be "beautiful." One relatively antique wood carving, completely West African in style, was found some years ago in a hounfor near Léogane and is now in the collection of the Musée du Peuple Haitien in Port-au-Prince (see fig. 57).

One of the most flourishing arts of the hounfor is the *vèvè*, or ritual drawing made on the earth in the course of a service. Most commonly these beautiful and ornate designs are made with white meal or flour, and in a few of the cults, primarily the Pétro, lampblack and red brick dust are also used. The vèvè is made by the houngan or the mambo. With sure, practiced movements, the cult priest allows the meal to trickle through his fingertips onto the ground where the rites are taking place, usually in the peristyle of the hounfor itself. The drawings he makes are composed of a multiplicity of cabalistic symbols—heart shapes, stars, interlocked V's, flags, abstract phallic forms, crosses, swords,

2: Courlander 9-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

machetes, circles, mortar shapes, and so on—each with its own specific meaning. Sometimes the vèvè becomes openly pictorial, and there emerges a ship for the loa Agwé, snakes for Damballa and Ayida, a bull for the loa Taureau, a knapsack for the loa Azaka, or even a portrait of a deity, perhaps smoking a pipe or holding a sword.

The vèvè is not a permanent record. It is made as an act of supplication or veneration, and once it is finished it has no further value. In the ensuing ritual and dance, the vèvè is obliterated by the feet that pass across it. At the hands of one houngan, this invocational act results in a crude, even childlike, design. At the hands of another, it produces a drawing of beauty, integration, and highly developed form.

The drum-making craft, too, has offered an unbroken sequence of opportunity for satisfying artistic urges. The drum has a traditional form that cannot be tampered with; its shape is predetermined by its function, by the log from which it is hewn, and by existing standards. And yet, the drum maker has found it an object on which he can devise new decorative motifs, and he may even give it personal uniqueness. Some drums have styles that may be associated with specific regions of the country, others bear the stamp of the individual artist. Paint has been used on Haitian drums for a hundred years or more as a complement to carving. One assotor drum dating from the earliest days of the Republic, and now preserved in a collection owned by the Bureau of Ethnology in Port-au-Prince, is decorated with a medallion showing the Haitian coat of arms, grenadiers, red and yellow snakes, and a sun with a face. This magnificent instrument, apparently the only one of its age and kind to have survived the years, is one of Haiti's art treasures.

The *couis*, or calabash bowl, of the hounfor rites is another object which is decorated with motifs. Abstract designs, ritual symbols, and sometimes human and animal figures are painted on the inner or concave surface of the bowl.

The rural traditional arts of Haiti have had a belated impact on the arts of the city. Within the past fifteen years there have appeared a number of painters, sculptors in wood and ceramics, and ironworkers who constitute an art movement sometimes referred to as the Haitian "renaissance." Many of these artists draw heavily on national lore and legend for inspiration and subject matter. Some of them are men who came only recently from villages or distant farms. Their work adorns many public buildings in Port-au-Prince and is eagerly sought by art collectors. Members of the elite class who once looked with embarrassment on the "primitive" countryside are finding increasing respect for the potentialities of their country cousins.

114 535 tion helped to perpetuate some prevailing misunderstandings and errors. This distinguished observer wrote:

> The Negroes of the Gold Coast, warlike, bloody, accustomed to human sacrifice, know only dances as ferocious as themselves, while those from the Congo, Senegalese and other African shepherds or agricultural tribes, love dancing as a relaxation, as a source of sensual pleasure. Brought from all parts of Africa to our Colonies . . . , the Negroes brought here and preserved their taste for the dance, a taste so strong that, however tired out from work the Negro may be, he always finds strength to dance and even to travel a long distance to satisfy this desire.
>
> 114 533 535 When the Negroes want to dance, they take two drums, that is, two hollow logs, of unequal length, with one end open, while the other is covered with sheepskin. These drums . . . resound under blows of the wrist and movements of the fingers of a Negro who sits astride of each drum. The larger drum is beaten slowly, the other more rapidly. This monotonous and hollow sound is accompanied by the noise of a certain number of calabashes which have been filled with 534 pebbles . . . Several *banzas*, a sort of large guitar with four strings,[2] join the concert, the tempo of which is regulated by the clapping hands of the Negro women, who form a large circle. They form a sort of chorus, which responds to one or two strident solo voices, which repeat or improvise a song.[3]

535 As for the dance movements themselves, Saint-Méry wrote:

> A male and [a] female dancer, or several dancers divided into equal numbers of each sex, jump into the center of the circle and begin to dance, always two by two. This dance, which varies little, consists of a very simple step in which one foot is put forward after the other, and then drawn back quickly, while striking the toe and the heel on the ground . . . Some turn in place, or around the woman, who turns also and changes places with her partner; that is all which one sees, except for the movement of the arms which the man raises and lowers with the elbows quite close to the body and the hands almost closed. The woman holds two ends of a handkerchief, which she waves . . . One would hardly believe how lively and animated it is, and how much grace it derives from the strictness with which the musical rhythm is followed. The dancers replace one another without respite, and the Negroes are so intoxicated with pleasure that it is necessary to force them to conclude dances of this sort, called *kalendas*.[4]

[114] [971] Saint-Méry then brings forth one of his conclusions, that this dance is obviously the development of a "comparatively uncivilized people," and that it comes from Africa, "where its characteristic features exist everywhere, even among the Hottentots."

114 535 177 [971] Here he missed the point altogether. Although many of the characteristics of this *kalenda* (or Calinda) were African, it had already been intensively hybridized with European dance concepts, such as the pairing off of males and females, who danced as couples. Then, as today, the dances which amazed and shocked the European observer were precisely the ones that had taken over certain European traditions.

2 [Actually a banjo-like instrument of African provenience. The similarity of the word banza to banjo appears to be more than a coincidence. Cf. P. 352, category 116. --Analyst]

3 [Saint-Méry, De la danse, as translated by Lillian Moore in Moreau de Saint Méry and "Danse," Dance Index, October, 1946, P. 238. Cf. P. 352, category 116. --Analyst]

4 Moore, op. cit., P. 238. Cf. P. 352, Category 116. --Analyst]

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535 The Pétro dance is similar in many respects to other serious cult dances, but it is primarily a complicated and sometimes agitated foot dance. The second of the two drums beats "rest-two-three." On "two" the right foot pushes forward in a thrusting, sliding motion, and on "three" the left moves outward and the right moves in. The position is held on the "rest," though there is no visible pause, because of the speed of the dance. Shoulder movement is only of secondary importance in the Pétro, though the arms are constantly moving gracefuly to balance the foot movements. Women sometimes use a typical Congo pose, with the left hand on the hip and the right hand held poised in the air.

The Jenvalo, the supplication dance of the Dahomey rites, is quite different in both spirit and technique. The dancers, usually older rather than younger people, move in a generally counterclockwise direction around the sacred center post of the dance court. They dance with gracefully bent backs, their hands touching their knees. The shoulders and the upper part of the body move forward and back in a gentle, graceful, undulating movement. The dancers pirouette lightly from time to time, the women holding their long skirts out to the side to make a restrained *laillé*. They sometimes pause to perform a brief cross step with other dancers, but there is no pairing off. They are dancing as individuals—or, more accurately, as a group. There is occasional improvising, inventing, and performing of difficult maneuvers; but the individual dancer moves always with the others in a slowly revolving amorphous circle around the center post. The graceful bending and undulating of the upper body give even to strangers an impression of respectful supplication.

Near the town of Jérémie in southern Haiti some years ago I saw a performance of the Mousondi "battle-dance," an activity of the Congo "nation." The dance was performed by six men, several of them stripped to the waist, the others wearing the traditional blue denim peasant jackets. The leader of the dancers was a bearded man about fifty years old, lean and athletic. On his legs he wore anklets made of seed pods and beer-bottle caps which rattled rhythmically as he moved. On a string around his neck he wore a wooden whistle, which he blew from time to time to accent the beat of the drums and to give signals.

[291] [301] [534] [533]

The dancing took place around a bonfire. The music was provided by three musicians, two playing Congo drums and the third beating hardwood sticks against a board. Each of the dancers carried a stick about thirty inches long. They moved first clockwise, then counterclockwise, then half of them moved in one direction and half in the other, weaving in and out, holding their sticks like sabers. On a signal given by the

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dramatic art. The narrator interprets his characters as he goes along, providing different voices, singing, giving humorous or tragic emphasis, and changing his facial expressions to convey the temper and mood of the protagonists. He imitates the movements and actions of the animals. In print, his broad gestures and sly intimations are all lost. The Haitian tale is a vehicle for the actor, who plays his theme according to circumstances and the responsiveness of his audience. The storyteller, like the musician, is likely to be found almost anywhere. But there are storytellers of special renown, known as *maît' contes*—who may be called upon to entertain young people at a party or Nine Night gathering. They have seemingly endless repertoires and can go on indefinitely telling tales about Bouki and Malice, or Jean Saute and Jean L'Esprit. In former times, the maît' conte used an instrument such as the *banza* to intersperse his narration with music. Old people recall that trough zithers and other instruments of African design were once employed for this purpose.

Anansi, the spider trickster-hero and buffoon of West Africa, has survived in Haiti as well as elsewhere in the Antilles. In Jamaica and other British islands, Anansi has become Brother Anansi, Sister Nancy, or just plain Nancy. Although he usually figures in tales dealing with other animals, he has more and more come to assume a human form, as he has in Haitian tales. But in Haiti the name Anansi is only rarely heard. Anansi's cleverness and stupidity are now attributed to two characters named Ti Malice and Nonc' Bouki, both of whom are regarded as human beings.

In West Africa the spider hero directed his mischief against the great and strong creatures of the forest, now one, now another. In Haiti, Ti Malice, who has inherited Anansi's wit and guile, pits himself mostly against Bouki, who has inherited Anansi's stubborn nature and his pompous stupidities. Ti Malice (whose first name probably comes from the Spanish *tio*, uncle) has become the slick sharpy of the city, the clever and predatory "operator," the practical joker. Like his spider prototype, Ti Malice has humor as well as cunning, though he is often remorseless. Bouki is full of self-confidence but is slow-witted and an easy prey for Ti Malice. He is thought of as a clumsy peasant of the mountains. He has a constant desire to pit himself against Ti Malice, and a capacity for involving himself in utterly fantastic situations which appeal to the Haitian sense of the ridiculous.

In many respects this team of comedians resembles another pair known in South and Central America—Tio Conejo (Uncle Rabbit) and Tio Coyote; both are pranksters, but the rabbit usually manages to outwit the coyote. Ti Malice and Bouki also figure in the universal tar-baby story, and in many other tales known in the United States in which Br'er Rabbit

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18. Musical Instruments

The Haitian people have drawn heavily on both Europe and Africa for their musical inspiration. In music, as in other traditions, the country is bicultural. There is, on the one hand, the music of the so-called *élite*—the literate and educated class which is concentrated in the cities—and on the other hand, the music of the peasants, the plantation laborers, and the lower economic groups of the town. The *élite* music is in the European or Western tradition, while the true folk music of Haiti follows, in the main, in the wake of West African musical culture. The instruments of *élite* music are primarily those of Western Europe. The instruments of the folk music of the country are those which can best interpret the mainstream currents of the West African heritage—instruments of African design and function. European-style instruments have infiltrated into the folk music too, but the over-all pictures is that of a survival of African musical devices to interpret music cast in an African mold. It is the folk-music instruments which call for examination—the instruments that are made in the villages and tiny huts in the mountains, the instruments on which the significant music of Haiti depends.

The materials from which these instruments are made are usually those found upon the land. If a man wishes to make a drum, he cuts down a tree for the purpose. For material for a bamboo trumpet he goes to the bamboo grove. For a flute, he cuts a reed. Metal is used for making African-style bells, rattles, singing horns, and substitutes for bamboo trumpets.

The drum in its many forms is the most common instrument of all. It is used for dances of all kinds, for cult rites, for work music on the road and in the field, and for assembly calls and signals. Not very many years ago the older people in the south of Haiti still spoke of the "talking drums" they had seen as children.

The craft of drum making is a very skilled one, but the tools are

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1965) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

534 322 [412] The craft of drum making is a very skilled one, but the tools are simple: chisels, machetes, and fire. The core of the log is removed by burning and gouging, and the outside is shaped with a machete, or sometimes a hachet. The wood is selected and processed carefully. Firing of the core of the log depends a good deal on how dry the wood is, for the wood must burn slowly. It is believed that wood cut at the right stage of growth and at the right phase of the moon is resistant to the [824] ever-present powder-post beetles. Mahogany was once favored because it was durable and beetle resistant, even though it was heavy. But in recent decades mahogany has become scarce, and modern drums are made of lighter woods.

534 298 [534 091] Drums made in the nineteenth century not only conformed to the patterns of certain West African prototypes but were also carved and decorated. Some of these old drums are still to be seen, but there are not many left. An ancient carved assotor drum (previously cited) has fortunately been preserved by the Bureau d'Ethnologie. But between the ravages of the powder-post beetles, age, and the periodic orgies of drum burning by the church and misguided public officials, most of these [648] ancient works of art have long since disappeared. During the American occupation of Haiti—from World War I to 1932—American military personnel also contributed to the mania for drum burning. And as late as 1941 there was a massive, cleric-inspired drive to wipe out these instruments as remnants of *sauvage* elements in Haitian life.

534 198 531 The effect of this war against the drum was only to improve the business of the professional drum maker. Drums had become expendable, hence they were made simpler. The carved decorations disappeared. Paint was substituted, and less attention was given to detail. The important thing was to produce a good functional instrument. But the creative instincts of the drum makers sometimes still take over, and many of the modern drums are beautifully proportioned, with delicate geometric patterns carved around the base, or foot. Among certain categories of drums the painted decorations consist solely of the name of the loa to whom the instruments have been dedicated—St. Jacques perhaps, or Papa Pierre, or Ezilie.

534 191 794 196 534 Drums differ in design according to the use for which they are intended. The Arada or Vodoun drums are used primarily in connection with the dances and rituals of the Vodoun cult—the cult built around the gods and rites of Arada and Yoruba theology. They resemble closely drums which are used today in Dahomey, Nigeria, and Togoland. They usually come in sets of three. The largest, the *manman* (also called *bounter* or *bountegri*), may be three to four feet high. The middle-sized drum, or *second* (also called *grondé* or *moyen*), is about two feet

[TEXT CONTINUES ON P. 193]

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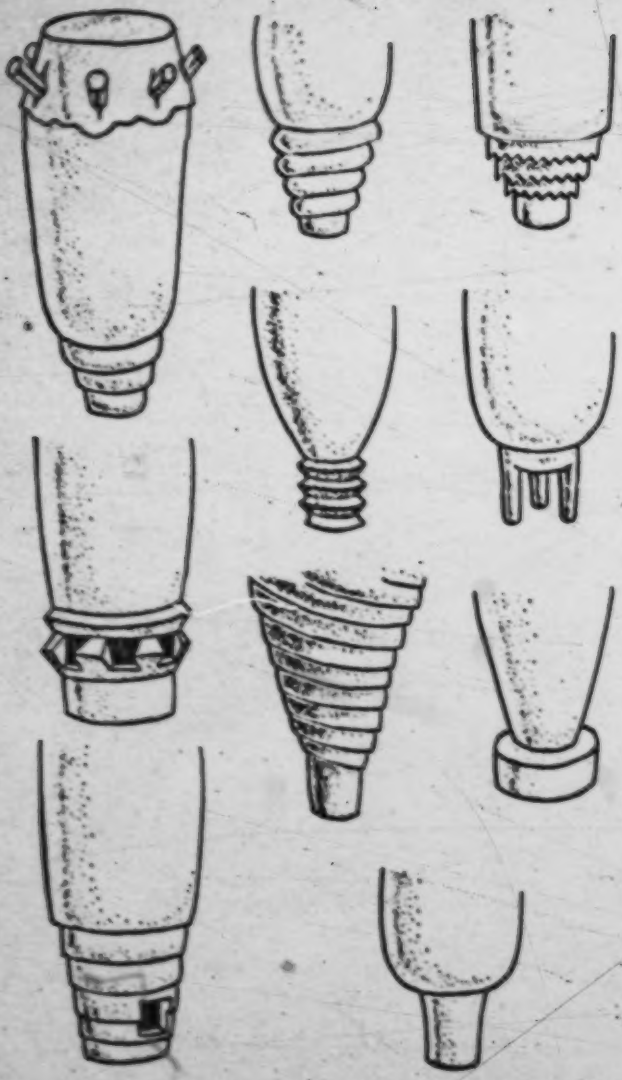

INDIVIDUALITY IN DRUM DESIGNING: Although the Arada or Dahomey-style drum is distinct from those of other "nations" or cults, there is a noteworthy variety of artistic decoration in the carving of the base. Some patterns are found only in certain regions or villages.

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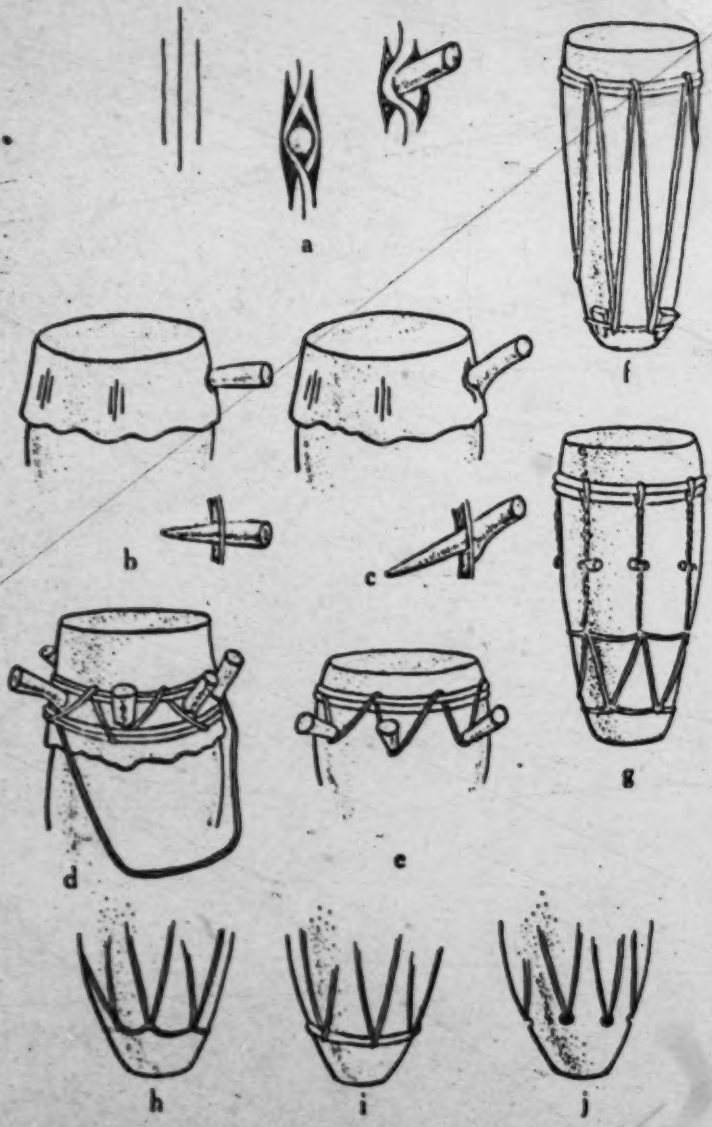

MOUNTING OF DRUMHEADS: To fasten the Arada drumhead to the drum, three slits are made in the skin over the peg hole, forming two short strips (*a*, left); peg or hook is inserted as shown in *a*, center and right. *b*, peg mounting. *c*, hook mounting. *d*, traditional pattern for lacing of cord. *e*, Arada drum showing combination of peg and hoop mounting techniques: the skin is fastened around the lower hoop; the upper hoop, laced to the pegs, holds it in place. Congo and Juba-type mountings are shown in *f* and *g*; in *f*, tension on the cords is provided by hammering down the wedges at the base; in *g*, the tourniquet method is used. *h–j*, three ways of fastening the cords to the base of these drums. In *h*, a cord loop is employed, and in *i*, a wooden hoop. Sometimes holes are provided in the base, through which the cords are laced, as in *j*.

high. The smallest—the *bula*, or *bébé* (sometimes called *dundun*)—is about eighteen or twenty inches high. They are all called sometimes by the Yoruba name *bata*, originally applied to a two-headed instrument.

Arada drumheads are of cowhide, held in place by hardwood pegs set into the bodies of the drums at an angle. The drums are tuned by driving in or loosening the pegs. Even the slitting of the skins where the pegs pass through them is African in pattern. In Cuba the drums of the Arada (there called Arara) cult are made in precisely the same way, though they are used in batteries of four rather than three.

In a variation of the peg type of fastening, the skin is attached to a hoop, which, in turn, is held in place by ropes laced to the pegs. Each drum maker has his own preference as to the angle and size of the pegs, the proportions of the drums, and the wood from which they are made. One drum maker near Léogane claimed to be able to identify the region from which a drum came by examination of the pegs and the carvings around the base.

The small Arada drum, the *bula*, is usually "whipped" with two long thin sticks to provide a sharp and penetrating sound. The middle-sized drum is played with one bare hand and a stick. The stick may be straight or bowed. The bowed drumstick is known as an *agida*, the name used for the same type of stick in Dahomey.[1] On infrequent occasions the *moyen* drum is played with two sticks—one straight and one bowed. The large drum, the *manman*, is played by the most accomplished of the drummers in the orchestra. He plays with one bare hand and one stick, which may be of various forms. It may be straight, have a hook-shaped head, or be mallet-shaped; or it may be the grotesquely twisted stick known as a *baguette Guinée*. All these forms are known in Dahomey and elsewhere in West Africa.

The three Haitian Arada drums, supplemented by an African-style bell known as an *ogan* and small gourd rattles (cha-chas), form the standard orchestra for most dances of the Vodoun cult. The *ogan*—the forged iron bell with an external striker—has all but disappeared in recent years, along with the institution of the village forge. In its place one may see any kind of metallic object, such as a hoe blade, a link of chain, or a length of pipe, all of which are referred to by the old name *ogan*. In Cuba the Arada cult preserves the bell, both in single and double form, under the same name. The word *ogan* probably derives from the Yoruba term for this instrument, *eganran*.

Playing in concert, the three Arada drums produce a range of tones, and the player of the *manman*—the chief of orchestra—adds to the effect by frequently striking his stick against the side of the drum above

[1] [Herskovits and Herskovits, Suriname Folk-Lore, P. 89. The stick is also known in Suriname. Cf. P. 353, Category 116. -- Analyst]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

534 533 the pegs. High notes are achieved by striking the drumhead near the rim, and low notes near the center.

534 516 The drummers usually sit together on a bench or in chairs at one side of the dance court. The larger and middle drums are slightly tipped to keep their "mouths" open; the *bula* stands squarely on its base and is therefore somewhat muted. The player of the *manman* often drums in a standing position, bracing the instrument by means of a cord around his thigh.

534 796 Another drum associated with the Arada rites is the assotor. This drum is usually about six feet high, and may be from two to two and a half feet in diameter. It is played in an upright position, and two or three small "windows" near the base permit the sound to emerge.

[794] This big drum is used only for the Assotor service, at which the Dahomey "nation" plays host to the loa of all the various rites. Usually there is only a single drummer, who plays while standing on a bench or raised platform; but on occasion, two or even three drummers play simultaneously on the single drumhead.

534 171 It is interesting to note in passing that most of the Vodoun drums have Dahomean names and are of Dahomean design, despite the fact that Yoruban religious motifs have survived. The Yoruban double-headed *bata* drum, used in Nigeria for invocation of the principal deities, appears to have survived in decadent form on the island of La Gonave, where it is known as *pongwé*. Curiously, it is played not like the Yoruban *bata* (one hand on each head) but like another Yoruban instrument, 534 the *dundun*, or pressure drum. The instrument is held under one arm and played only on the forward head. Significantly enough, this drum

[794] is said to be used only for Nago (Yoruba) rites. Another drum reserved [796] for Nago services is found in the region of Léogane. It resembles the Arada drum in every respect except that it stands on three carved legs.

Drums associated with the services of the Congo "nation" are distinctly different from those found in Vodoun ritual. No drumsticks are used, and the heads are of goatskin rather than cowhide and are held in place by a system of cords and hoops. The Congo drum seen today stands about three feet high; old people say that within their memory there was a variety of Congo drum as tall as a man. Unlike the Arada [531] drum, the Congo drum usually has no carved or painted decoration. For the "pure" Congo rites, two of these instruments, accompanied by gourd or metal rattles of various kinds, constitutes an orchestra. One typically Congo rattling device, called *mayoyo*, consists of three large gourds containing pebbles, on the top of a long pole.

A variant of the Congo drum is used for Pétro rites. It is similar

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

in construction but stands a little shorter. Two Pétro drums of slightly different sizes and tones, called *baka* and *ti baka*, in combination with one or more rattles, an iron percussion device, and sometimes an assot, make up an orchestra.

The *assot* is a small board which is beaten with sticks. Often these sticks are flat, and sometimes a small wooden bench is substituted for the board.

Dances for which the Congo or Pétro drums are used include Pétro, Kitta, Bumba, Salongo, Bambarra, Moundongue, Congo Loangue, Pastorel, Mousondi, and Moutchétché. The drum for the Congo Loangue dance formerly was somewhat taller and narrower than the present Pétro drum, but the distinction is no longer maintained.

The Juba, or Martinique, drum is similar to the Pétro or Congo but wider and squatter. It is laid on its side for playing, the drummer sitting astride and pressing his heel against the drumhead to mute it or change the pitch. For Juba or related music, a second man, called the *catalier* (the one who *cata*), beats sticks against the body of the instrument behind the drummer.

In the northern part of Haiti one also finds the Zesse drum, used exclusively for the Zesse dance. It is cylindrical, about thirty inches high, and is played in an upright position. A wire is stretched across the goatskin head in the manner of a snare drum. Like all drums with goatskin heads, it is beaten with the naked hands.

A large two-headed drum called the *tymbale* is used as a work drum for labor societies and for processions, and in combination with other drums it sometimes appears in the Juba and secular Congo dances. The heads are mounted on hoops, which are held fast by lacing. The drum is carried by a rope slung over the shoulder or around the neck. Sometimes an assot striking board is affixed to the body of the drum.

A miniature copy of the tymbale is called a *tambourine*. It is used in carnival dances, notably the Mascaron. Carried by a cord which hangs around the neck, it is played with two diminutive sticks. Drumming is primarily a man's prerogative, but during carnival days women or girls may be seen playing the *tambourine*.

In southwestern Haiti, and possibly elsewhere, special drums are used for the Manuba dance. The Manuba drum is about a foot long, cylindrical, and about five inches in diameter, with two drumheads held together with cords. A pair of these drums is joined by a rope about two feet long, which is hung around the neck so that the two drums are in convenient playing position on the chest.

Twin drums which are hung over the knee are known as *marassas*—The Haitian word for "twins."

534 [177] the Haitian word for "twins." They are used primarily for secular music of the Cuban type, and may in fact be an importation from Cuba. The marassa is one of the few drums on which a finger technique is used; that is, striking with individual fingers rather than with grouped fingers. Marassas are often played in concert with guitars and marimbas.

The *basse* is the shallow finger drum resembling what in the United States is called the tambourine. Constructed in the pattern of an African prototype, its head is usually fifteen or eighteen inches in diameter and made of goatskin. Small metal disks sometimes are inserted in the frame [314] to act as rattles. The head is kept well coated with resin or beeswax and [237] is tapped and rubbed with the fingers. The *basse* is used only for secular music, except in the rare instances when it is used in Congo services. Some Haitians believe that the name of the instrument comes from the word *Basque*.

534 202 It is reported that signal drums were still in use a decade ago in remote sections of the southwestern peninsula. One of these instruments, according to description, is distinguished mainly by its large belly and small mouth; like the Juba drum, it is played on its side. Another style of signal drum has a slit in the side and is played erect, much like an African slit-log drum standing on end.

534 [171] Another percussion instrument is the bamboo stamping tube, called the *ganbo* or *ti kanmbo*. It is African in origin and probably takes its name from the Loango term for the same device, *dikanmbo*.[2] The stamping tube is simply a length of bamboo, open at one end and closed at the other by a natural joint membrane. The closed end is struck sharply upon the ground, and the tone comes from the open top. The device works like an inverted drum, the closed end functioning like a drumhead. A battery of four or five ganbos may provide the percussion music otherwise played by drums. The musician corresponding to the *bulatier* of the drum orchestra plays two small stamping tubes, one in each hand. The other musicians have one each, thicker and longer than the bulatier's and producing deeper tones. Cupped hands are manipulated over the open ends for varying the sounds. This instrument [171] has survived in various parts of the New World where Africans were settled, particularly other West Indian islands, Brazil, and Venezuela. In Venezuela the stamping tubes are called *quitiplas*.[3] They have recently been reported from various areas of West Africa, including French Equatorial Africa.[4]

534 648 798 [115] The ganbos had a singular burst of popularity in Haiti during the United States military occupation of the country after the first World War, when drums were often seized and destroyed. Drums could not

[2] [Informant: Joseph Lengo, Brazzaville. Cf. P 354, Category 116. --Analyst]

[3] [Library of Congress album, Folk Music of Venezuela. Cf P 354 Category 116. --Analyst]

[4] [Pamphlet accompanying recording, Music of Equatorial Africa (New York: Ethnic Folkways Library, 1950). Cf P 354, cat. 116. --Analyst]

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easily be hidden, but the ganbos were simply slipped into the straw roofs and thus put out of sight. Moreover, by some strange process of reasoning, military authorities regarded the bamboos as "harmless," though they were used for the same purposes as the contraband drums.

There are numerous other kinds of simple percussion devices. One such instrument, now less commonly seen than previously, is a length of open bamboo laid in the crotches of two Y-shaped sticks set in the ground. Like other *catas*, the bamboo is beaten with two sticks. Some Haitians believe that in former days such bamboos were played in batteries like a xylophone.

Sometimes a light-weight wooden cylinder, or perhaps a drum denuded of its playing head, is carried by the timekeeper of a coumbite. It, also, is played on the side with sticks.

Wooden mortars for pulverizing grain take on the character of musical instruments when used in combination with voices. When two or more mortars are used, with two men or women wielding the long polelike pestles in each mortar, the rhythmic effects can become fairly complicated.

The *claves* or *palos* (small hardwood sticks) are used primarily in connection with secular dances of a Cuban type, or to accompany such instruments as the guitar and the marimba. One stick is held loosely in the natural fold of the hand, so that it is free to vibrate, and is struck sharply with the second stick. The tone is almost metallic because of the hardness of the wood, usually lignum vitae. The name of the instrument is recognizable as a form of *clavar*, or *clavo*, Spanish for "peg" or "nail." It is thought that wooden shipbuilding pegs provided the name for this device, which has equivalents in West Africa.

Among the folk instruments there are various kinds of horns and trumpets. Cows' horns are played musically in some parts of the southern peninsula, though usually they are used as ritual instruments and signaling devices. Wooden trumpets called *pistons* are carved from the stems of the papaya tree. Conch-shell trumpets, known as *lambis*, are commonly used as signaling devices by fishermen. They are also to be found among the coumbites, in Rara festivities, and occasionally in rituals, where they are usually identified with sea deities. In carnival times the old fashioned phonograph horn makes its appearance as a combined trumpet and voice amplifier.

Probably the most important of the trumpets is the one made of bamboo. It is called a *vaccine* or *bois bourrique*. Both names have interesting origins. The cow's horn was at one time used for magico-medical purposes. The leaf doctor used it as an "applicator" of powders and potions. A small opening was made in the point of the horn, and

[See plate 8, P. 112-F. -- Analyst]

534 755 the horn itself was filled with the magico-medical preparation, which was called *vaccine*. The point of the horn was applied to parts of the body which needed treatment, and the powers of the potion were thus transmitted to the affected areas. In time, the cow's horn itself came to be known as a *vaccine*. Eventually the horn used for musical purposes took over the name, which was then transferred to the bamboo trumpet. The other name by which the bamboo trumpet is known, *bois bourrique*, means burro wood. But it probably is a corruption of *voix bourrique*, meaning "donkey's voice," an accurate description of the sound it makes.

534 535 The vaccine consists of a length of bamboo, with a joint membrane at one end cut into a mouthpiece. Trumpets of different sizes give different tones, and three to five of them together constitute a vaccine orchestra. Vaccines are employed by the coumbites in the fields, and they are heard in the towns and cities primarily during the pre-Easter festivities. In the Rara festivals the vaccine players march together, blowing and tapping their trumpets with sticks, followed by a crowd of dancers. Traditionally, the bamboo trumpet is not employed in religious music, although in recent years it has made its appearance occasionally in Congo-Guinée rites.

534 There are two kinds of musical scrapers. The one more often seen is the *grage*, a piece of sheet metal perforated in the fashion of our common kitchen grater. It is "played" by scraping a piece of wire or a nail across its rough surface. Found in secular rather than religious settings, the grage is likely to be used in combination with such instruments as the *tambourine*, marimba, claves, and basse. The second form of scraper is the *dentlé*, or *dentli*, a notched stick played with a bamboo scraping blade. The free end of the stick is sometimes braced against a bench or a plank, which acts as a sounding board. Some Haitians reported that in the old days gourds were used as sounding chambers.

534 171 The scraper in one form or another appears to have both Indian and West African precedents. Its relationship to the washboard as used in Negro folk music in the United States is obvious. The notched gourd [177] called the *guiro*, found in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other West Indian islands, appears to be present in Haiti only as an imported instrument.

534 535 Rattles of various types are used in religious and secular dances, in the invocation of deities, and as accompaniment for solo singing. The most common of the rattles is the simple cha-cha, or *kwa-kwa*. It is a small gourd with a wooden handle, with seeds inside. It is usually played by the singing leader as a device to keep time. Sometimes the long dry seed pods of the cha-cha tree are used as a substitute.

000 In the Rara season two special rattles are used. One of them is made

During the Rara season two special rattles are used. One of them is made of metal and resembles a tin can with a wooden handle. The metal sometimes is perforated with numerous small holes, and inside are *hoholi* seeds, which act as rattlers. This instrument, known as a *tchancy*, is usually decorated with colorful ribbons when in use. (In northern Haiti the term *tchancy* is used to designate metal wrist rattles worn by drummers.) The other Rara rattle, called *jouconjou* or *joucjou*, is made of three gourds carried on a long pole. One of the gourds is affixed to the end of the pole, and the others are fastened to the terminals of a short crossbar, giving the effect of a cross with bulbous ends. Since many of the Rara processions are dramatizations of the Christ epic, the instrument could be interpreted as a Christian symbol, though its conversion into a noisemaker appears to be an African conception. The *jouconjou* may be a variant of the small rattle-cross which is used by the Abakwa secret society in Cuba.[5]

The sacred gourd rattle of the cult priest is called *asson* or *baksor*. It is pear-shaped and covered with a network of beads which act as external strikers. It is used by the houngan to summon the spirits of the dead, to praise or call upon the deities, and to accompany the performance of magic. The asson is of West African derivation, and its counterparts are to be found among the cults of Martinique, Trinidad, Cuba, Brazil, Venezuela, and elsewhere where African traditions have left their mark. The gourds from which the assons are made are grown in a special grove sacred to the loa.

A large calabash rattle has been reported from several isolated regions of Haiti, primarily from the north. Some rattles of this kind have been described as more than twenty inches in height and covered by a network of external strikers, usually wari beans. The calabash rattles are used in groups of three. They are shaken and thumped against the palm of the hand, producing both deep and high-pitched sounds. These oversize rattles are employed without drums and are said to be associated with Arada-Nago rites. They appear to be a survival of the instrument known among the Yoruba as the *shèkèrè* and are found in Cuba in both Dahomey and Lucumí (Yoruba) cult centers.

Probably one of the oldest of Haitian folk instruments is the earth bow, known as the *tambour maringouin*, or mosquito drum. Traditionally the mosquito drum is made in the following way:

A hole is dug in the earth, perhaps a foot or more deep. It is covered with palm or banana bark, which is pegged firmly all around. A cord is attached to the center of the bark membrane and drawn taut to a bent green sapling, one end of which is buried in the ground at a slight angle. The cord is plucked and snapped with the fingers of one hand, while

[5] [See Courlander, "Musical Instruments of Cuba," Musical Quarterly, April, 1942, pp. 233-234. Cf. p. 354, Category 116. -- Analyst]

534 its tension is varied by pressure on the bowed stick with the other hand, producing a change of pitch. The covered hole acts as a sound chamber.

In a "portable" model of the mosquito drum a tin pail or can is used for a sounding chamber. The pail is inverted and fastened to a small plank, to which the sapling also is affixed. It is believed by some observers that the instrument has special significance during the pre-Easter holidays (Mardi Gras and Rara),[6] but it may be used at almost any time of the year. The "accompaniment" for the mosquito drum usually consists of some kind of *cata*—sticks beaten upon a board or on the drumhead itself. On occasion, two or three of these instruments are beaten together, and the rough bark membrane may be rasped for additional effects. Most of the songs that go with the mosquito drum are secular. One of the appropriate songs favored by children goes:

Maringouin dit moin ta zwing oh!
Maringouin dit moin ta zwing!
Ta zwing oh!
Ta zwing! [Ex. 166]

Mosquito says I will zwing, oh!
Mosquito says I will zwing!
Will zwing, oh!
Will zwing! *

534 191 The earth bow has a clear African ancestry. In almost identical form it has been found in the French Sudan, among the Washambala of East Africa, the Bongos in the eastern Congo, the Bafia and Baya in the Cameroons, the Fulbe in the Sahara region, and the Futadjallon people in Nigeria.[7]

The German explorer Georg Schweinfurth might have been describing a Haitian scene when he wrote, some eighty-five years ago, of the Bongos:

> Performers may be seen sitting for an hour together with an instrument of this sort: They stick one end of the bow into the ground, and fasten the string over a cavity covered with bark, which opens into an aperture for the escape of the sound. They pass one hand from one part of the bow to another, and with the other they play upon the string with the bamboo twig and produce a variety of humming airs which are really rather pretty. This is a common pastime with the lads who are put in charge of the goats. I have seen them apply themselves very earnestly and with obvious interest to their musical practice, and the ingenious use to which they apply the secrets of the theory of sound.[8]

* The hum of the mosquito as it strikes.

[6] [Comhaire Sylvain, Les Contes haitiens, pp. 97-98. Cf. p. 354, Category 116. -- Analyst]

[7] [Curt Sachs, Geist und Werden der Musikinstrumente (Berlin, 1929), pp. 60-61. Cf. p. 354, Cat. 116. -- Analyst]

[8] [Schweinfurth, The Heart of Africa, I, 287. Cf. p. 354 Category 116. -- Analyst]

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Except for the "aperture for the escape of the sound," the Bongo instrument is identical with the Haitian earth bow. The resemblance of the instrument to a spring snare strongly suggests that it may have been developed from some such device for catching game. This possibility is strengthened by the use of the earth bow among certain of the Bambarra hunters of the French Sudan as a game lure, the music played upon it being thought to have magical properties to attract animals to the region of the hunt.[9] A "portable" type of spring snare used among the Ashanti of Ghana is strikingly similar in form to the Haitian "portable" earth bow (see fig. 80).[a]

This instrument has survived not only in Haiti but in the United States as well. The washtub device that is an important part of American Negro folk music is a clear development of the earth bow. The washtub is inverted and a cord is attached to the tin bottom. The other end of the cord is fastened to a stick which is braced against the lip of the bottom side of the tub. The stick and the cord are manipulated precisely like the Haitian and African instruments. There is implicit evidence that the role of the washtub has been taken over in modern jazz orchestras by the double-bass fiddle.

Another device of African provenience is the Haitian *marimba* (also called *malimba, manimba,* and *marimbula*). It consists of a wooden box upon which a series of metal strips is mounted in such a way that they may be plucked with the fingers. In the face of the box, directly behind the keys, there is an aperture to permit the escape of the sound. The number of keys varies from three to seven or more, though some of them may produce duplicate tones. The instrument is usually about the size of a soap box. The musician sits upon it, facing the same way as the keyboard, and plays with his hands between his knees. The marimba is used for carnival music and for dances of the secular types, frequently in combination with a guitar, claves, and a cha-cha. It is a West Indian development of the small African *m'bila* or *tanza,* or "thumb piano." Several examples of the smaller instruments played with the thumbs have been found elsewhere in the West Indies, notably in Cuba,[10] and large forms of the sansa have been reported in recent years in Africa.

Among the instruments more or less restricted to religious service are whistles and small hand bells, which are used for invoking and saluting the loa and the dead. *Canaries* (large clay water vessels) also enter into ritual use. They are sung into, tapped with sticks, and on some occasions are covered with goatskin heads and played like a drum.

[a] [Fig 80 appears on p. 112-55. -- Analyst]

9 [Informant: Sobi has Tore, Bamako. Cf. p. 354, [115] category 116. -- Analyst]

10 [See Courlander, Op. Cit., p. 239. Cf. p. 354, Cat. 116. -- Analyst]

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534 [541] Among the noisemakers heard mostly at the time of the Rara festival (usually on Good Friday) are the *von-von*, or bull-roarer—a thin flat piece of wood whirled on the end of a cord—and the *rara*, the common wooden ratchet. Various types of wooden flutes, usually of bamboo, are also used.

[184] In the remoter parts of the mountains you may now and then hear of an instrument known as the *banza*. A century ago, it would appear, the *banza* was a stringed instrument resembling a banjo. The similarity [177] of names is striking, in view of the instrument's early form. Today, however, the word *banza* is applied to the homemade fiddle which is used to accompany the minuet and other old dances of European origin.

534 524 178 A children's instrument seen sometimes in the mountains is constructed of half of a calabash shell, across the opening of which have been stretched a number of cords. This plucked device appears to be a decadent form of the African trough zither.

[pp. 203-313 not processed]

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539

Example 158

Ayida isn't joking, oh!
Ayida isn't joking with them!
Enla, [ritual] language, oh!
Ayida isn't joking, oh!
Ayida isn't joking with them!
Those who wish to be satisfied are satisfied!
Those who wish to be angry are angry, oh!
Ayida, oh!
Ayida isn't joking with them!

Example 159

Long live the king and dear queen, oh!
Another misfortune, [they] talk behind my back!
Long live the king and dear queen, oh!
Another misfortune, [they] talk behind my back!
Fire, oh, heat!
Fire, oh, heat, oh!
Another misfortune, [they] talk behind my back!

Example 160

Lɛgba Aguator é!
Oh what loa are you?
Ago I am a loa!
Lɛgba Aguator é!
Oh what loa are you here?
Quitti quitti yé, oh, I am a Nago loa!
Lɛgba Aguator é! What loa are you!

Example 161

Oh, *colico ya ya*, my little banza, *colico!*
In truth, *colico ya ya*, my little banza, *colico!*
Colico ya ya, my little banza, *colico!*
A nou paillé colico ya ya, my little banza, *colico!*

(A children's story song. The italicized parts are not translatable. The banza is a small musical instrument; currently the word is used for a banjo or fiddle, formerly it designated an instrument of African origin.) [534]

Example 162

Adié Compère Frog, that is not running!
Frog hops, ti dong, ti dong dong, frog hops!

(A children's song from a story about a race between the frog and the horse.)

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533 EXAMPLE 163
539
524 The pig says wain!
The pig says wain, hot mama!
Etc.
See the pig having fun!
Enhé, enhé, hot mama!

(A children's *gage* song.)

EXAMPLE 164

Bwèment rwo!
Adieu, Bwèment, make Bwèment walk!
Bwèment, that's it, that's it, Bwèment!
Make Bwèment walk!

(A children's game song.)

533 EXAMPLE 165
539
You arrive, Rigal, you enter!
You arrive, Rigal, you arrive!
When Rigal turned into a large pig,
He came to Jacmel to eat us!

(This song names a specific individual, Rigal, as having turned into a pig, like a member of the Vinbindingue Society, but it is not clear whether it is intended to be taken seriously or is merely banter.)

EXAMPLE 166

I will zwing, oh!
The mosquito says I will zwing, oh!
Etc.

● [534] (Zwing is the sound the mosquito makes. The song is usually sung to the accompaniment of the *tambour maringouin*, or mosquito drum.)

EXAMPLE 167

The small boy stands on the terrace,
He stamps his feet *duo duo!*
The small boy stands on the terrace,
He stamps his feet *duo duo!*
Oh, [unchained?] gives them *paillette*, oh!
The small boy stands on the terrace,
He stamps his feet *duo duo!*
[Unchained?] gives them *paillette*, oh!
Furiously gives them *paillette*, oh!
Mayoussel
Find your woman, *mayoussel*
Mayou-youssel

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Chapter 5: *Services for the Loa and the Family Ancestors* (pp. 41-74)

[1]Note that the houngan and the laplace are performing services normally performed by the *prêt' savane.*

[2]Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, 165.

[3]Parsons, *Spirit Cult in Hayti.*

[4]Account given by Jean Ravel Pintro.

[5]Informant: Albert Kofi Prempeh, Ghana.

[6]Account given by Voluska Saintvil. A. W. Cardinall notes in his book *Tales Told in Togoland* (p. 69): "Trees are in most cases treated with respect. Before a man dare fell one for a canoe he must and invariably does sacrifice to its spirit and apologizes for the harm he is about to do it."

[7]The rite of *rafraîchi tête* is conducted periodically for a *maît' tête* after the original *lavé tête* ceremony. The purpose is to "refresh" the loa and make him content with his residence in the head of the devotee.

[8]Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, p. 233.

[9]It is of interest to note the perseverance of traditional attitudes toward water rites in certain Negro cults in the United States. River baptism often is attended by ecstatic seizures in familiar form.

[10]Odette Mennesson Rigaud, "Notes on Two Marriages with Voudoun Loa," in Appendix A of Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, p. 264.

Chapter 6: *Songs of the Peristyle* (pp. 75-94)

[1]This theme is further commented on in chap. 13. Compare with the following excerpt from a Surinam song reported by Herskovits in *Suriname Folk-Lore* (p. 689):

I have no mother there,
I have no father there,
I have no sister there,
I haven't got anybody there.

Chapter 7: *In the Mapou Tree: Magic, Demons, and Compacts* (pp. 95-104)

[1]Simpson, "Haitian Magic," *Social Forces*, October, 1940, p. 97.

[2]Note the coincidence of the term *gris-gris* or *grigri* as used in the United States, where it has the same meaning as *mojo*, or "voodoo" charm.

[3]Simpson, "Haitian Peasant Economy," *Journal of Negro History*, October, 1940, p. 503.

[4]Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, p. 243.

Chapter 8: *Mardi Gras and Rara: Jugglers, Maypoles, and Kings* (pp. 105-109)

[1]Aubin, *En Haïti*, p. 42.

[2]Marionettes of this kind have been observed in both East and West Africa and are well known in the region of Senegal. I saw a phallic marionette, virtually identical with the Haitian version, in the neighborhood of Khartoum, Sudan.

Chapter 9: *Land and Work* (pp. 110-121)

[1]Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti*, p. 362.

[2]Herskovits, *Dahomey*, I, 300 ff., describes Dahomean polygamous marriage in its various forms. Although Dahomean plural marriage is complex in terms of gifts, obligations, and

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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against almost unanimous public opinion opposing enforcement. In 1828 it was reported that dancing, which the Code had strictly limited to week ends, was a nightly diversion near the capital. One of the principal dancing resorts was the house of a captain of rural police, the very man who was supposed to repress such amusements.[45]

Boyer had done his best, and his best was merely a good piece of office work. When his Code failed to operate, he could think of nothing further to suggest for the economic rehabilitation of Haiti. The last fifteen years of his administration witnessed a gradual lapse into that small-scale farming which was to be characteristic of Haiti for the remainder of the nineteenth century. By comparison with former standards, production and steady industry had both fallen off since Boyer came to the presidency. The testimony of visiting foreigners is unanimous on the decline of industry.

The British consul, Mackenzie, said in 1827 that there was very little field labor then being done, and that only elderly people, principally aged "Guinea Negroes" long accustomed to steady work, carried on the tradition. No measures of the government could induce young people born in Haiti to labor or to change from their "habitual vagrancy."[46] Another Englishman, James Franklin, remarked in 1828 that land values throughout the republic had greatly declined because no one could make a profit within any moderate time. Labor was high, he writes, for ordinary wages did not attract the workers who preferred idleness. (This word is certainly unfair: it was work at their own bidding which they preferred, not idleness.) Government lands lay untilled, no one evincing the slightest desire to purchase or utilize them. Franklin continues:

> Land also in the possession of individuals is similarly circumstanced; and those who are large proprietors cannot effect a sale of any produce which they may have beyond the quantity which they can consume; consequently a proprietor may have an immense extent of land, and yet be quite unable to derive any benefit from it by cultivation, or to convert it into money, for the want of purchasers. Thus . . . there is no individual wealth in the country, because, although a man may have very large landed possessions, still those possessions are unavailable, for they produce him nothing, as he can seldom find persons disposed either to occupy or purchase them.

45. Although dancing is spoken of here as an amusement, it is highly probable that at least a part of it had connection with the Vodun religion.

46. Charles Mackenzie, *Notes on Hayti* (London, 1830), I, 100. Mackenzie is clearly exaggerating, unless by "field labor" he means work on plantations, in contrast to farming on small plots.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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the sacrifices; food is set before the sacrificial animal, and if this food is eaten by the creature or creatures, it is known that the loa is satisfied. Then comes the actual sacrifice of the animal, a slaying neither ostentatious nor dramatic, since often it does not occur in the houmfort itself. It is at this juncture that possession is looked for. The loa, by seizing one or more of his devotees—or, if possession fails, by the divination of the priest—makes known his desires. The demands of the loa are likely to be modest: a candle, a special article of food, certain specific attentions. Occasionally he insists upon an impressive sacrifice. Whatever his desires, they must be gratified or else the loa will mildly harass the family; long refusal will produce anger and full vengeance. If the god is Rada, his sacrifice will be white, red, or vari-colored; if he is Pétro, he will wish black or gray animals—chickens, turkeys, goats, bullocks.

The service itself, then, is entirely religious in nature, consisting wholly of ceremonies and rituals conducted by officiating priests, with the purpose of restraining or pacifying gods who may have been pursuing a family with misfortune, or gratifying those who have made it happy. The dance following the service apparently expresses the joy of the family at dangers averted and gratitude for blessings bestowed.

In contrast to the private character of the service, the dance has all the appearance of a social event. Invitations to it are sent all over the countryside. People attend for good fellowship, gossip, and the sheer delight of dancing, but in the background one is always aware of a religious element as well. The dance is held in a specially constructed *tonnelle*, a roof of boughs and leaves supported by uprights. Drums are not always used at the earlier service, but no dance could be held without them. The crowd drifts in slowly, so that the dance may be long in getting under way. The best drummers in the community may not arrive until after two or three hours. Three drums of different sizes, all properly baptized, set the rhythms, and sometimes gourd rattles embroider a commentary upon the beat. Whereas at the service possession comes as a result of the priest's invocations, at the dance it is inspired by the drumming. Each loa has his own particular rhythm, so that as soon as it is determined what god has seized upon a dancer the drummers take up the rhythm of that god. The officiant immediately rushes to the mounted person with a calabash of water and a candle; by following the "horse" around and

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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527 On Saturday nights one hears the drums beating all over the country, but if one follows the sound he is more than likely to end [534] up at nothing more esoteric than a neighborhood dance. Other [535] musical instruments than drums are rare, but any community has drums; and these set a rhythm to which one can dance. Generally food is available at these affairs, as well as drinks both hard and soft. 273 It is not extraordinary to discover that a few of the men have drunk rather freely of clairin, the raw rum of the country; most drunkenness seems to lead to good-natured ribaldry rather than to offensive violence. It is unusual for a drunken man to cause damage of any 535 serious nature. The dancing corresponds neither to American ballroom dancing nor to set folk dancing. Most of it is done solo, and an individual participates or remains on the outskirts of the enclosure as 533 the mood of the moment impels him. Over the beat of the drum can be heard one of the current songs, more than likely a bit smutty in nature, and frequently poking fun at some well-known personage, or making allusions which in normal speech might seem crude.

541 One of the popular Sunday afternoon sports is the *gaguère*, or cock- [525] fight, held under a shelter back of a home. Much small betting goes on. The spectators sit or stoop close around the dusty ring, talking to the cock they are backing, commenting on the fight, offering advice to the owner. Between rounds the cocks are rubbed down, sprayed with water or rum, fondled and excited anew. Toward the latter stages of any fight the spectacle becomes gory and, to the uninitiated, distinctly cruel.

526 There is singularly little sport in Haiti. Élite youths play tennis; boys enjoy football; and swimming is a common diversion. Few sports are competitive and, so far as the writer has observed, the peasants have in their games practically nothing resembling organization.